# The Burman, His Life and Notions

Sir James George Scott

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# THE BURMAN

## HIS LIFE AND NOTIONS

F. W. Grous.

# THE BURMAN

## HIS LIFE AND NOTIONS

BY

SHWAY YOE (Sir) J. G. Scott

SUBJECT OF THE GREAT QUEEN

London

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*When anything surprises or pleases a Burman he never fails to cry out, Amè — mother. Following the national example, to whom can I better dedicate this book than to you, my dear Mother? Who else will be so eager to praise; so tender to chide; so soft to soothe and console; so prompt to shield and defend? To you, therefore, I dedicate it; and if this tribute of reverence and gratitude gives you a day's pleasure it will have been a koung-hmoo—a work of merit.*

# PREFACE

PHONETICISM is said to be "the murderer of history," and there has been a craze of late years to prevent this felony by the adoption of "scientific methods" of rendering Burmese in English characters. I have no doubt that whatever other faults I may be accused of, I shall be greatly blamed for endeavouring to reproduce the pronunciation rather than the orthography of Burmese words. But I may be allowed to contend that the catch phrase ascribing blood-guiltiness to phoneticism, however just it may be in a country where *fonetic nuz* puzzle a long-suffering generation, is most misleading and calumnious where it is applied to a foreign language, and especially to such a language as Burmese. No one who is concerned about the etymology of a language is likely to study it except in the national character; if he trusts to transliterations, scientific or otherwise, he will most assuredly be little worth listening to. When an author writes in English about a little-known people he presumably writes for a majority of readers who know nothing whatever of the language, and cannot be reasonably expected to have any very great concern in its etymology as long as they get a more or less correct notion of how the words should be pronounced. This is most especially the case in Burmese, where, in very many cases, the orthography of a word supplies but the remotest possible hint of its pronunciation.

The scientific men write bhoora (lord), the Burman pronounces the word pǎyah; tsit-tshay (ghost) is a formidable way of reproducing the spoken tăsay; pa-nya (learning) but inadequately represents the sound of pyinya; khwon (taxes) is a startling, not to say puzzling way of suggesting the sound kohn. The matter is made none the easier by the difficulty of finding an English equivalent at all for some Burmese sounds. In the words nyoung, pyouk, gyee, and the like, the *y* belongs to the preceding letter, and has always the consonantal and never the vowel sound. Such words are therefore invariably monosyllables. Again, the nou'pyit sound, which I have written *è* on the analogy of the French *mère*, has as a final vocable no equivalent in English. *Errant* gives the force as an initial letter. The scientific form of *eh* is certainly misleading. The initial *ky* is a great crux to beginners in Burmese. It requires a fine ear to catch the precise sound. An English officer will call for his clerk, Moung Poh Chè, and the punkah-boy will pass on the word for Moung Poh Kyè—tyè it might almost be written. But it is little use multiplying instances. Suffice it to add that a final consonant is always silent—strangled is almost a literal translation of the Burmese word.

Of published works on Burma I have found those of Colonel Yule, Captain Forbes, and Dr. Bastian most valuable in supplying hints as to those of the national customs most likely to be interesting to foreigners. Had Captain Forbes's life been prolonged this book would probably have had no *raison d'être*.

In conclusion, I have only to record my indebtedness to the Rev. Dr. Marks, the head of the S.P.G. in Burma. For over twenty years he has laboured in Burma both as a teacher and a missionary, and there is no Burman in the

country to whom his name is not known, and with whom it is not held in reverence. Had it not been for him this work would never have appeared.

The chapters xviii. to xx., and xxiii. to xxvii. in the first volume, and chapters v., viii., x. to xiv., xvii., xxiii., and xxiv. in the second, have already appeared, mostly in a shorter form, in the columns of the *St. James's Gazette*.

*June* 1882.

With the exception of a few verbal alterations, rendered necessary by the annexation of Upper Burma, this second edition in no way differs from that which preceded it.

*November* 1895.

# CONTENTS


| CHAP. | | PAGE |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | First Years | 1 |
| 2. | School Days | 14 |
| 3. | Buddhist Baptism | 21 |
| 4. | Life in the Monastery | 30 |
| 5. | Tattooing | 39 |
| 6. | Ear-Boring | 48 |
| 7. | Marriage | 52 |
| 8. | Domestic Life | 65 |
| 9. | The House and its Belongings | 75 |
| 10. | The Earth and its Beginning | 88 |
| 11. | The Ladder of Existence | 97 |
| 12. | The Noble Order of the Yellow Robe | 107 |
| 13. | The Monasteries | 124 |
| 14. | Schismatics | 143 |
| 15. | Pagodas | 153 |
| 16. | The Legend of the Rangoon Pagoda | 178 |
| 17. | Images | 183 |
| 18. | Bells | 201 |
| 19. | A Pagoda Feast | 209 |
| 20. | Duty Days | 215 |
| 21. | The End of Lent | 221 |
| 22. | Nats and Spirit-Worship | 229 |
| 23. | Rice Cultivation | 241 |
| 24. | A Gracious Ploughing | 255 |
| 25. | A Harvest Feast | 261 |
| 26. | Silk-Growing | 267 |
| 27. | Lacquer Ware | 272 |
| 28. | Nga-Pee | 278 |
| 29. | Plays | 284 |

| CHAP. | | PAGE |
|---|---|---|
| 30. | DANCING | 308 |
| 31. | MUSIC AND SONGS | 314 |
| 32. | THE TAWADEHNTHA FEAST | 326 |
| 33. | A SOHN-DAW-GYEE FEAST | 332 |
| 34. | A WORK OF MERIT | 339 |
| 35. | THE NEW YEAR'S FEAST | 345 |
| 36. | A BOAT-RACE | 353 |
| 37. | CHESS | 363 |
| 38. | GAMES | 369 |
| 39. | LUCKY AND UNLUCKY DAYS | 379 |
| 40. | THE BUTTERFLY SPIRIT | 386 |
| 41. | CHOLERA SPECIFICS | 392 |
| 42. | MAKING GOLD | 397 |
| 43. | SUMPTUARY LAWS AND ETIQUETTE | 402 |
| 44. | WIZARDS, DOCTORS, AND WISE MEN | 409 |
| 45. | SLAVES AND OUTCASTS | 423 |
| 46. | FORMING THE NATIONAL CHARACTER | 431 |
| 47. | THE LORD OF THE CELESTIAL ELEPHANT AND OF MANY WHITE ELEPHANTS | 442 |
| 48. | KING THEEBAW—I. A PRIVATE INTERVIEW | 455 |
| 49. | KING THEEBAW—II. THE MANY-TITLED | 461 |
| 50. | KING THEEBAW—III. A KADAW DAY | 466 |
| 51. | THE PALACE | 472 |
| 52. | THE LORD WHITE ELEPHANT | 480 |
| 53. | MINISTERS OF STATE | 485 |
| 54. | THE BURMESE ARMY | 492 |
| 55. | JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION | 504 |
| 56. | REVENUE SYSTEM | 518 |
| 57. | LAND TENURE | 526 |
| 58. | MANDALAY AND RANGOON | 534 |
| 59. | ERAS, COMPUTATION OF TIME, WEIGHT, ETC. | 544 |
| 60. | THE LANGUAGE | 555 |
| 61. | SELECTIONS FROM THE LITERATURE | 561 |
| 62. | STRAY NOTES | 572 |
| 63. | A POHN-GYEE BYAN | 578 |
| 64. | DEATH AND BURIAL | 584 |

# CHAPTER I

## FIRST YEARS

It is fortunate for the young Burman that on his first appearance in the world all attention is directed to the mother, and the "little stranger" is left very much to himself till he has attained a stronger vitality. Were it not so, the rival parties of the Dietists and Druggists might quarrel over the relative quantities of the four elements, fire, air, earth, and water, composing the new arrival, and diet and dose him out of existence immediately, in a heroic attempt to attain an equilibrium of forces. The mother indeed is the major point of interest in all countries, but childbirth nowhere entails such penalties as in Burma. Directly the child is born, the mother is rubbed all over with na-nwin (turmeric), and a big fire is lighted as near as the construction of the wooden or bamboo house permits, while rugs and blankets are heaped over her to the extent of the possessions of the family. As speedily as possible the midwife prepares a draught called say sehn (green medicine), the composition of which is a tradition with the Woon Swès, and is kept a secret from inquisitive males. This the victim in bed has to drink perpetually during seven days, and for the same period, irrespective of the blankets and the time of year, is heated up with oht poo. These are big circular or lozenge-shaped bricks. They are heated blazing hot in the wood fire, dropped for a few seconds into a pot full of water, and then wrapped up in cloths and applied to the body of the mother. In addition to this, doses of turmeric are regularly administered, and every now and then

she is made to smell sah-mohn-net, a plant (the *Nigella sativa*), which is put in an earthen pot, strongly heated, and then triturated into the shape of a ball. The odour is not exactly such as one would recognise as calculated to exhilarate any one, but probably after the hot bricks and the say sehn everything else comes as a matter of detail. All this is done to drive out the noxious humours which are supposed to be generated by the birth of a child. On the seventh day the woman takes an elementary kind of Turkish bath. She sits over a large jar of boiling water, medicated with tamarind twigs and a few other kinds of leaves and grasses, with a blanket over her. After about an hour of this she has a cold bath, and is then free to do as she pleases. She usually goes to bed.

It might be supposed that under this treatment death in child-bearing would be very frequent, but as far as imperfect statistics can show the percentage is not much higher than in other countries. The result, however, appears in another way. A woman ages up ten or fifteen years for every child she has. It is satisfactory to notice that in all the larger towns in Lower Burma the more unpleasant features are fading away before the example and influence of women of other nationalities. In the jungle and in Upper Burma, however, ancient use and wont still prevail, and the young mother of fourteen or fifteen is shrivelled into thirty with her first baby.

If a woman gives birth to a still-born child, a piece of iron is placed in the cloth in which the body is wrapped, or in the coffin if there is one, and at the burial some member of the family says some such formula as "Never more return into thy mother's womb till this metal becomes soft as down."

If a married woman dies before bearing a child (a-lohn hnin thay thee), a Cæsarean operation is performed, and the a-lohn is buried in some secret place. The reason alleged for this is, that were it not done, the husband in future existences would marry this woman again, and she would die in the same way. Were the embryo not secretly buried it would be disinterred by hmaw-sayahs, necromancers, and wizards, who would make evil uses of it. Children's cauls are as highly thought of by Burmans as they are by English

sailors; only where the tar thinks he will be saved from drowning, the Turanian expects to gain the patronage of any great person he may address.

The infant having survived and the mother recovered from her roasting, the next thing to be done is to name the child. This usually happens about a fortnight after the birth. A fortunate day and hour is sought out by some Brahmin astrologer, or a sayah of lesser note, if there is no such dignitary in the neighbourhood. A great feast, as elaborate as the wealth or the ambition and borrowing capacities of the parents admit, is prepared, and all the friends of the family and the neighbours are invited to come. The child's head is usually washed for the first time on this day. The ceremony is therefore called kin-bohn tat thee. A decoction of the pods and bark of the soap acacia (*Acacia rugata*) or kin-bohn is prepared, and with this the midwife washes the infant's head and the guests wash their hands. Most of them bring friendly contributions towards the feast, or perhaps a little money. The mother sits down in the centre of the circle with the infant in her arms, and near her is the father. The company sit gravely smoking and chewing betel for a time, and then some elder, or a near relation of the parents, seems struck with a name, and suggests it aloud. Everybody accepts it on the spot, and falls to discussing the aptness of the name and the accomplishments and virtues of people they have known with that appellation. This is, however, all a pre-arranged thing. The father and mother have settled beforehand what the child is to be called, and have apprised the loo gyee selected what is to be the result of his cogitations. The midwife then gets a present according to the means of the family, having previously, after the seven days' roasting, received the regulation fee of one pyee, the sixteenth of a basket of husked rice, one mat, and a four anna bit. Then everybody adjourns to the feast, which, with the dessert of le'-pet, salted ginger cut into small strips, ground nuts, fried garlic, the invariable betel apparatus, cheroots, and what not, pass the time till nightfall, when, except in the case of poor people, there is always a pwè which carries on proceedings till the next morning.

The name given thus appears to be entirely a matter of choice; but this is not so. The consonants of the language are divided into groups which are assigned to the days of the week, Sunday having all the vowels to itself. With all respectable families it is an invariable rule that the child's name must begin with one of the letters belonging to the day on which it was born, but within these limits any name may be chosen. As an immediate consequence it follows that a Burman has a birthday every week, a frequency of recurrence which renders the event monotonous, and precludes the friendly amenities of western nations on the occasion of natal days.

The letters of the alphabet are apportioned to the days of the week in the following rough rhyme, which every Burman child can repeat with as much certainty as the English one will display in the recitation of Little Jack Horner:—

Ka, kha, ga, gha, nga, Taninla.
Sa, hsa, za, zha, nya, Ainga.
Ta, hta, da, dha, na, Sanay.
Pa, hpa, ba, bha, ma, Kya-thabaday.
La, wa, Bohddahu.
Ya, ya (the Pali and Arakanese ra), Yahu.
Tha, ha, Thouk-kya.
A, Taninganoay.

That is to say, children born on Monday have for the initial letter of their names, K, Kh, G, Gh, or Ng; for example—Moung Ngway Khine, Mr. Silver Sprig; Moung Gouk, Mr. Crooked; Mah Kway Yoh, Miss or Mrs. Dog's Bone; Mah Khin, Miss or Mrs. Lovable. It will be noticed that in Miss Dog's Bone's names the initial letters of the two words do not agree as to the day. This often occurs, and the first name (Moung and Mah being merely honorary additions) always denotes the birthday. The better class families avoid such a mixing, however, as far as possible.

Tuesday's children have the choice of S or S aspirated (practically the same), Z, Zh, and Ny. For example:—Moung San Nyohn, Mr. Beyond Comparison; Moung Po[illegible] Sin, Mr. Grandfather Elephant; Mah Soh, Miss or M[illegible] Naughty.

Those born on Saturday have T, Ht, D, Dh, and N. The aspirated and unaspirated letters have to most Englishmen precisely the same sound, though a practised ear detects the difference immediately. Examples are :— Moung Bah Too, Mr. Like His Father ; Mah Nay Htohn, Miss or Mrs. Sunshine ; Moung Doo Woon, Mr. Pole Star ; Mee Noo, Miss Tender.

Those born on Thursday select from P, Hp, B, Hb, and M. For example : — Oo Poh Myah, Old Grandfather Emerald ; Moung Boh Galay, Mr. Little Officer ; Mah Hmoay, Miss or Mrs. Fragrant ; Mee Meht, Miss Affection.

Wednesday has L and W. Examples :—Moung Hoh, Mr. Yonder ; Mah Weing Hla, Miss or Mrs. All-Round Pretty ; Mah Hehn, Miss or Mrs. Growler.

From noon till midnight on Wednesday is represented as a special day, or, at any rate, under a special constellation called Yahu, and those born between those hours have the alternative of the two Y's, one of which is sounded R in Pali and by the Arakanese. Examples are :—Moung Yoh, Mr. Honesty ; Mah Yohn, Miss or Mrs. Rabbit, Oo Youk, Old Individual.

Friday has Th and H. Examples :—Moung Than, Mr. Million ; Moung Thet Shay, Mr. Long Life ; Mah Thin, Miss or Mrs. Learned ; Mè Thaw, (old) Mrs. Noisy.

A is the only letter assigned to Sunday, but the combination with it of the symbol of any other vowel changes it to the sound of that vowel. For example :—Moung Ohn, Mr. Cocoa-nut ; Moung Utt Nee, Mr. Red Needle ; Mah Eh, Miss Cold ; Mah Ehng Soung, Mrs. Housekeeper ; Oo Oh, Old Pot.

A common popular belief is, that, according to the day of the week (or rather the constellation representing that day) on which a man is born, so will his character be. Thus a man's name discloses his probable characteristics to the superstitious.

A man born on Monday will be jealous ; on Tuesday, honest ; on Wednesday, short-tempered, but soon calm again, the characteristic being intensified under Yahu ; on Thursday, mild ; on Friday, talkative ; on Saturday, hot tempered and quarrelsome ; on Sunday, parsimonious.

Not only has every day its special character and its fixed

letters, but there is also a particular animal assigned to symbolise it, and red or yellow wax candles are made in the forms of these animals to be offered at the Pagoda by the pious. Each worshipper offers the creature-candle representing his birthday, or that of any particular friend or relation whom he wishes well. In this way Monday is represented by a tiger; Tuesday, by a lion; Wednesday, by an elephant with tusks; Yahu by an elephant without tusks; Thursday, by a rat; Friday, by a guinea-pig; Saturday, by a nagah or dragon; Sunday, by a kalohn, the fabulous half-beast, half-bird, which guards one of the terraces of Mount Myemmoh (Meru), the centre of the universe.

Little candles of this kind are to be had at any of the stalls which cluster about the steps and the base of every pagoda in the country, and they are as freely offered as flowers, and fruits, and gold-leaf.

It will be seen that there is no such thing as a surname among the Burmese. A man may have a dozen sons not one of whom has the same name as his father. Moung, literally "brother," has come to stand practically for "Mister." Poh and Shway and Bah may be applied to any one without regard to his birthday, Shway implying usually politeness or affection. Nga, used in the English law-courts and by pompous native officials generally, implies superiority claimed by the speaker or writer. Koh denotes friendship, or superior age and dignity in the person addressed. Moung Shway Than might call himself indifferently — Moung Than, Poh Than, Bah Than, Koh Than, Nga Than, or Shway Than, and might add Moung to any one of these. As a matter of fact most Burmans chop about their name a good deal during their lives. He may begin by being called Loogalay Gnè, "Little Wee Man." When he grows up a little the family probably get to call him Loogalay Gyee, "Big Little Man." Later, when he begins to think of his appearance and look after the girls—and they begin that sort of thing very early in Burma — he probably calls himself Moung Loogalay or Shway Loogalay, "Mr. Littleman," or "Mr. Boy," or "Golden Boy." There are a variety of other changes possible and likely. Finally, when he reaches the age of thirty-five or forty he either readopts the original Gnè and

calls himself Oo Gnè, "Old Small" or "Old Wee"; or takes Oo Loogalay instead, "Old Boy." To this additions may be made according to fancy. Indeed the possible forms of any given Burmese name would supply a very fair sum in permutations and combinations.

There is a similar freedom with the women's names. Every woman married or unmarried may be called Mah. When she becomes elderly Mè is very often used. Mee implies youth in the person addressed, or affection on the part of the speaker. A young husband or lover usually calls his lady love Mee Mee. She addresses him as Moung, "brother," or familiarly as Taw, or Shin. Bah in Lower Burma is a polite form. In Upper Burma, especially in the Palace, Moung Moung, or Tin Tin, or Teht Tin (prostrating the forehead, Kowtowing) are used in a courteous way. It is considered hardly civil in any case to use the bare name; the office held, or some particular alms given by the person addressed, supplies the easiest equivalent; otherwise some friendly form is employed in speaking. Kin-lay is used similarly in familiar fashion or in a friendly way to those of lesser rank. Thus a prince would use it in addressing an A-pyo-daw, a maid of honour.

Sometimes when a boy grows up he does not like the name his parents gave him. He can then change it by a very simple process. He makes up a number of packets of le'-pet and sends round a friend to deliver them to all his acquaintances and relations. The messenger goes to the head of the house and says: "I have come from Moung Shway Pyin (Mr. Golden Stupid). He is not to be called by that name any more. When you invite him call him Moung Hkyaw Hpay (Mr. Celebrated Father). Be good enough to eat this pickled tea," and then he goes on to the next house. It is not imperative that the letters of the birthday should be adhered to, but it is usually done. Women very seldom change names. It looks too much like a broad hint that they are growing up and have some notion of themselves, or that they have a mind of their own, which might prove irksome to possible husbands.

A careful note is made of the exact hour of birth with the object of drawing up the za-dah or certificate of birth

which every Burman has, and carefully consults, with the help of an astrologer, for the fixing of fortunate days and hours throughout his life. Sometimes the za-dah is drawn up very shortly after birth, but ordinarily not till the child is five or six years old. Then an old Pohn-na, a Brahmin, or any ordinary astrologer is called in. He records on a doubled up strip of palm leaf the year, the month, the day and hour at which the child was born; the name given to it; the planet in the ascendant at the moment of birth and the house in which it was at the time. This is scratched neatly on the palm leaf in the usual way with a metal style. On the other side are a number of cabalistic squares and numbers from which the future calculations may be made. There are said to be eight gyoh, or planets, and from these the days of the week are named, Wednesday having a second, Yahu, which rules from midday to midnight. Each of the planets has its own point of the compass as follows:—

N.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| W. | Yahu. 12<br>Symbol—Tuskless Elephant.<br>Wednesday, 12 P.M. to 12 A.M.<br>Unnamed. | Thouk-kya. 21<br>Symbol—Guinea-Pig.<br>Friday.<br>Venus. | Taninganoay. 6<br>Symbol—Kalohn.<br>Sunday.<br>The Sun. |
| | Kyathabaday. 19<br>Symbol—Rat.<br>Thursday.<br>Jupiter. | | Taninla. 15<br>Symbol—Tiger.<br>Monday.<br>The Moon. |
| | Sanay. 10<br>Symbol—Nagah.<br>Saturday.<br>Saturn. | Bohddahu. 17<br>Symbol—Tusked Elephant.<br>Wednesday, 12 A.M. to 12 P.M.<br>Mercury. | Ainga. 8<br>Symbol—Lion.<br>Tuesday.<br>Mars. |

E.

S.

The stations, numbers, and symbols of the planets are recorded in a jingling rhyme, which is one of the first things boys learn in the monastic schools, *e.g.*—

Taninla kyah
Ta-seh gna
Nay nya
Shay yat ga.

Monday's number, I ween,
Is always fifteen ;
The tiger's the beast,
And its place is the East.

There are various ways of calculating the horoscope, most of them not to be understanded of the people, but the most popular, because the preliminaries are evident to everybody, is from the numbers given above. A person born on Monday remains under the influence of the moon for fifteen years. Then he passes into the house of Mars and sojourns there for eight years. At the age of twenty-three, Mercury presides over him and continues to do so for the next seventeen years, and so on to the end, which mounts up to 108 years. Should he outlive that he would begin the circle over again. Another way is to divide the inquirer's age by eight. If there is no remainder, the horoscope is made up from the gyoh under which he was born. If there is a remainder, the Baydin Sayah counts it out round the figure, in the direction of the hands of a watch, commencing with the birth planet. Thus a man born on Thursday, now twenty-nine years of age, would be under the influence of the moon. The gyoh at the four cardinal points, east, south, west, and north are happy in their influences, those on the diagonal rhumbs not so good. Yahu, and especially Saturday, have a particularly sinister influence. A man does most of the stupid and vicious things in his life while he is in Saturn's house. A young man born on Wednesday will need a lot of ballast to tide him through the ten years of Saturn, seeing that he enters on the danger at the age of seventeen.

Little gilded and red painted signboards are put up at all the pagodas, displaying the nan, the symbol, and the relative position of all the planets. Sometimes people worshipping at the pagoda go to the point of the gyoh, in whose house they were born, and offer up their lauds and candles there. But this is a mere matter of individual fancy, and is hardly open to those born in the diagonally situated

houses, for the niche shrines, if there are more than one at the pagoda, are always at the four cardinal points, and if there is only one, as is usual at small pagodas, it is to the East.

The za-dah is carefully kept by the parents until the child is old enough to take care of it himself, and thence-forward it is guarded as the most valuable possession the person has. No matter how often the name is changed the new one is never put in the za-dah, so that this certificate cannot be trusted to implicitly for a man's name. Some of them are very beautifully engraved and ornamented, but they are naturally not often to be seen. I only know of two in England at the present time (1881), one of which is my own and the other belonging to a travelling Burman. When a man dies, the za-dah is either destroyed or preserved as a memento by the family.

A curious instance of the firm belief of the nation in the reasonableness of the conviction that the planet under which one is born influences the fates and actions of one's life, is the fact that royalty ordains that the coins and measures used by traders shall bear the emblem of the monarch's birthday. Thus for example all the gold coins used in Upper Burma bazaars during the last reign had the figure of a lion on them, Mindohn Min having been born on a Tuesday. The few remaining from previous reigns bearing other symbols were rigidly kept out of the sight of Government officials. The Convener of the Fifth Great Synod, though probably the mildest and best sovereign Burma ever had, would certainly have stood no trifling in matters of this kind, which, if not amounting actually to a part of the religion, were at any rate very intimately connected with it. His son Theebaw Min, however, notoriously indifferent to religion, if a stronger word might not even be admissible, let the old weights remain in use, and probably called it the march of civilisation.

The naming and the construction of the za-dah being finished, the principal events in the youthful Burman's life are over, and the children run about in as happy a state of nudity as the respectability of the family permits; and boys and girls steal grandmamma's cheroot, and potter about making mud pies according to cosmopolitan infantile habit,

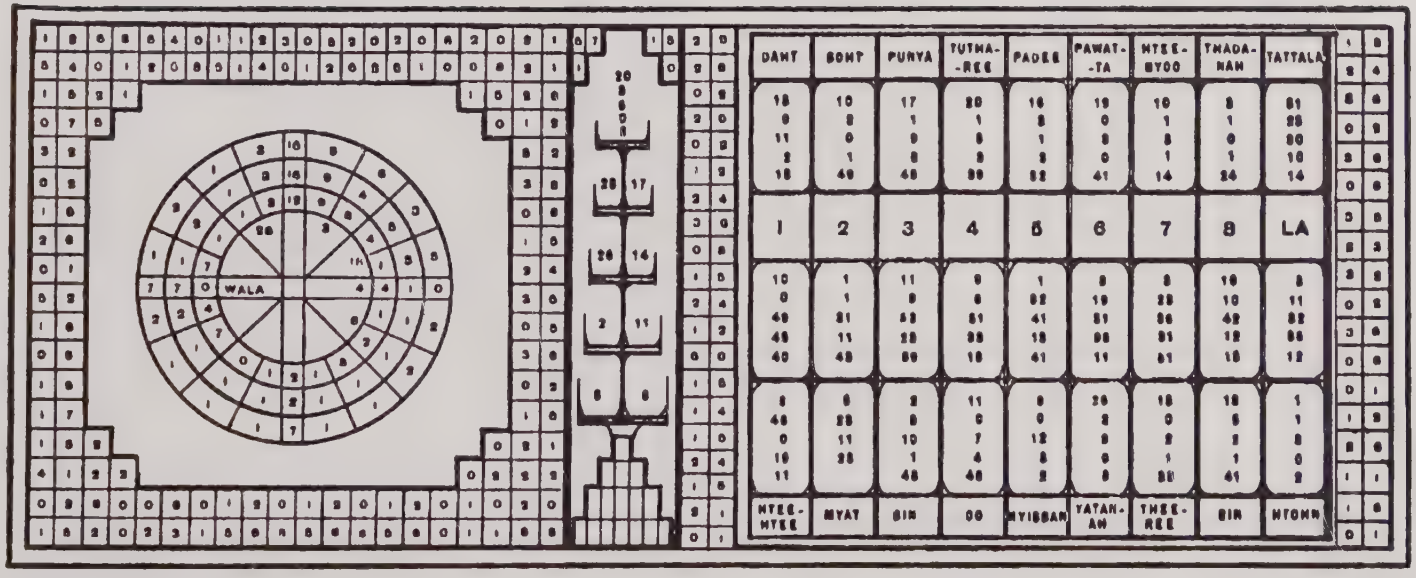
and not seldom getting up decorous and serious representations of the choral dances and dramatic performances they have seen. The spectacle of a little girl vigorously puffing a big green cheroot while she moulds a heap of mud into shapely form is only a little more startling to the white-faced foreigner than the declamatory passion of a five-year-old princeling. So it goes on till the eighth year is reached; then it is time to go to the monastic school.

On the following page is a copy of the za-dah of Shin Thooza. The young lady, I regret to say, is dead. The publication of her horoscope cannot therefore enable malicious persons to work her any harm by means of spells. The side represented is the obverse. I have submitted the figures to two very distinguished wranglers, but they have been unable to detect any system in them.

On the reverse, surrounded by an ornamental border of numbers written in accordance with a rhyme, are recorded in mystic language the details. The young lady was born in the year 1220 B.E. (twenty-three years ago), in the astrological cycle 422, in the month of Ta-bohdwè, on the ninth of the waxing moon, and the seventh day (Friday) of the week, in the evening, at thohn chettee gyaw, a little past the third hour, or more exactly, three nayee, two pads, and ten beezana. Then the precise position of the constellation in the heavens is noted. It is thirteen bǎwa (feet), five finger breadths, three mayaw (grains' length), one sessamum seed (nan), and eight hairs' breadths from the planet. Then it winds up to the effect that this is the horoscope of the maiden, whom, that she may be known by a pleasant name, her parents have called Shin Thooza. "May she live to be a hundred and twenty!" Alas! she did not.

At either side of these details are two identical magic squares, formed in accordance with the well-known Hindoo Law. Over one is written "The Buddha"; over the other "The Law"; beneath the former "Rangoon," and the latter "650." The two palm-leaves are tightly sewn together, and the writing and figures, done with a metal style on the dry leaf, are very neatly executed.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 2 | 9 | 4 |
| 7 | 5 | 3 |
| 6 | 1 | 8 |




| DANT | SOHT | PURYA | TUTHA-REE | PADEE | PAWAT-TA | NTEE-BYOO | TNADA-NAH | TATTALA |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 18 | 10 | 17 | 20 | 16 | 19 | 10 | 8 | 81 |
| 9 | 8 | 1 | 1 | 8 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 25 |
| 11 | 0 | 9 | 8 | 1 | 8 | 8 | 0 | 80 |
| 2 | 1 | 8 | 8 | 1 | 8 | 1 | 1 | 10 |
| 18 | 49 | 48 | 39 | 32 | 41 | 14 | 24 | 14 |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | LA |
| 10 | 1 | 11 | 0 | 1 | 8 | 8 | 10 | 8 |
| 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 32 | 19 | 28 | 10 | 11 |
| 49 | 31 | 28 | 51 | 41 | 31 | 06 | 42 | 82 |
| 48 | 11 | 28 | 38 | 18 | 08 | 01 | 12 | 06 |
| 40 | 48 | 09 | 10 | 41 | 11 | 01 | 10 | 12 |
| 0 | 0 | 2 | 11 | 0 | 20 | 10 | 10 | 1 |
| 48 | 28 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 0 | 11 | 10 | 7 | 12 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| 10 | 28 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| 11 | | 48 | 48 | 2 | 0 | 80 | 41 | 2 |
| NTEE-NTEE | MYAT | SIN | OO | NYISSAN | YATAN-AN | TNEE-REE | SIN | NTONN |

The general construction of all za-dahs is the same, but there are very considerable divergences in the number of figures. In another—I do not say whose it is—there are two circles only in the left portion, and only eight divisions in the right half, while several of the headings to the columns are different. The tee-padee-teing, the "highest post," between the two, also varies. I may mention that, beginning with the second stage on the left, descending and going up the other side, the numbers increase by three: *e.g.* 2, 5, 8, 11, etc. This is the case in all za-dahs, but they do not necessarily begin with the same number.

## CHAPTER II

### SCHOOL DAYS

I SUPPOSE Englishmen will never get rid of the notion that monastic schools must needs be dull and dismal, that hours of study only alternate with seasons of austerity and rough punishments. The uninhabited, almost deserted, appearance of the Burmese kyoung; its isolated position; the solemn, restful front which it always preserves, no matter how lightened up by profuse gilding and the carved magnificence of its panels and eaves' boards, or how embowered in rich and waving foliage; the austere aspect and slow-paced gait of the mendicants in their sad yellow robes—all these things inevitably encourage the foreigner in the belief that the monotony and the discipline must crush all life and light-heartedness out of the young scholars.

Nothing, however, can be farther from the actual fact. No Etonian, no old Rugbeian, can look back with greater delight on triumphs on the river or in the football field, than the grown-up Burman does on his early days at the Pohn-gyee Kyoung. There are no rough games to remember, it is true, no strivings of any kind with members of another institution. Those things do well enough for a cold-country people. The Burman's reminiscences are of a quieter kind. There was the emulation with the chin lohn, the wicker football, to see who could keep it longest in the air by dexterous use of knee, foot, shoulder, thigh, and cheek. How it relieved the body and freshened the mind after hours of poring over little hand-blackboards, covered with cramped words and letters, in the quiet rooms inside. Then there were the games at gohn nyin hto, an elementary

combination of skittles and ninepins, played with the big flat seeds of a jungle creeper. Pleasant they were under the shade of the great mango and peepul trees and the lofty cocoa-nut and palmyra palms, and exciting were the games, so that the customary stillness of the place was rudely broken upon by disputing voices, till a monk would come out and bring all back to work again as a penance. Then during the work there was the fun of the writing hour, when everybody had to write out maxims and prayers on his little parabeik with a clumsy pointed steatite pencil. There were always some stiff-fingered big pupils who could not manage to write their copy neatly or correctly, and as punishment had to take the good writers on their backs and march ruefully up and down the long schoolroom during pleasure. Sometimes they were thrashed, but the other punishment was the more dreaded. Then there was the schoolmaster monk, who would tell fairy stories of the other three great islands which lie in the sea round about Myemmoh mountain; of the half-moon-faced western islanders, and the wondrous tree that bore everything eatable one could wish for and delivered it ready cooked; the joys of the six heavens of the Nats and the grisly horrors of Nga-yè, with its fearful ages of fantastic punishments. Every now and again travelling necromancers and Hmaw Sayahs would spend a night or two at the monastery, and in recompense for the little delicacies and odds and ends of food which good-natured neophytes would get for them, used to tell stories of witchery and marvel. Sometimes there would be a Sah-haw Sayah, a kind of cyclic poet, who knew half the zahts in the language by heart, and would recite a little just for practice. Or a tattooing Sayah would come round and mark some particularly favoured youth with a quaint figure. Discussion as to its meaning and probable virtues would be carried on in the shadowy evenings for months afterwards. Varieties of this kind recur to the old Burman as he thinks of the school days long ago, and he sighs with as much conviction as any European that there are no days so happy as the school days.

English rule has disturbed old customs a good deal in Lower Burma, but even now we may say that, as an invari-

able rule, when a boy has reached the age of eight or nine years he goes as a matter of course to the Pohn-gyee Kyoung. It is open to all alike—to the poor fisherman's son as well as to the scion of princely blood—for no one pays anything, and it is not carefully considered who it is that fills the monkish begging pots in the daily round. Thus every Buddhist boy in the country is taught to read and write, and in this respect at least there are but very few illiterate Burmans. This primary education must by no means be confounded with entry into the monastery as a koyin-galay, or novice. Strictly speaking, this ceremony ought not to take place before the age of fifteen, and the earlier sojourn is only a preparation for it. The younger pupils may become boarders in the monastic building if they choose, but they do not assume the yellow robe, which marks them, for however short a time it may be worn, as members of the Assembly of the Perfect. They wear their ordinary clothes and retain their secular name.

As soon as the boy enters the monastery he is set down in the big schoolroom beside all the other boys, and receives a roughly-made black wooden slate. On this are written a few of the letters, perhaps the whole of the alphabet. A little explanation starts him off, and for the next few days he is engaged in shouting out their sounds at the top of his voice. Nobody minds him, for all the other scholars are similarly engaged in hallooing, and the monks derive a sense of comfort and a virtuous consciousness of doing good from the noise. It is as soothing as the sound of his mill-wheels to the miller, or the roar of traffic to the cockney. If a boy stops shouting, it is a sign that he has stopped working—and if he is not meditating mischief, it is probable that he is about to go to sleep, and he is corrected accordingly. The method is an admirable one for keeping the boys occupied —much more so than civilised Western methods—though I fear a council of English head-masters would scout the idea. The casual foreign observer who goes about taking notes, like Grose or the "Rampant M.P.," passes the ecclesiastical school, and in amazement at the seeming uproar within, declares that monastery schools are hopelessly badly conducted, and without the semblance of discipline. As a

matter of fact, the more noise there is going on, the more work there is being got through.

Doubtless it is a primitive method—doubtless there are thick-headed boys with tough lungs who shout out the kah gyee, kah gway (the A, B, C) with but the slightest portion of it remaining in their brains. There must be, because sometimes a boy takes a year to get through the alphabet,[1] the combination of vowel symbols, and the alterations of sound effected by the union of consonants, all of which are mere materials, and only a very small portion of the complicated system of the language. Nevertheless everybody learns in the end, and then they are set to read in the same way, and gradually advance in the immemorial regulation subjects. The first books—all the books, in fact, put in the boys' hands—are religious. They learn the five universal commandments, the five subsidiary rules, the Pali formulæ to be employed at the pagoda—pattering them over till they pour out of the lips with the fluency and precision of water out of a pump. When there are a number at the same stage in their studies, they repeat their lesson word for word after the teacher, sitting in wide rows before him, and all chanting with the same emphasis and apparently in the same key. The effect is very singular when a string of sonorous Pali versicles is being mouthed over in the striking intoned recitative peculiar to these formulæ. The twenty or thirty boys crouching down on their knees, their little heads every now and then bowing down to the ground over their hands joined in supplication, the yellow-robed monk sitting cross-legged on the dais before them, repeating in abrupt, jerky fashion the clauses of the form of worship, which the childish voices instantly catch up, forms a scene which never loses its novelty and attractiveness.

The little schoolboy slowly learns all these formulæ. Even near to and in the larger towns of Lower Burma the amount of secular learning, arithmetic, and so on that is learnt, is of the most meagre possible description. All relates to the tenets of religion—to the existences and teachings of the Lord Buddha. The things thus impressed on the youthful mind sink deep into the memory, and leave their mark

[1] Called the thin-bohn-gyee, the "great basket of learning."

on the whole future life of the young scholars. As long as these monastic schools are attended, all attacks on the Buddhist faith must be fruitless.

Besides the commandments, the payah-shekhoh, and the pareht-yohp thee, the lauds of the Lord Buddha, and the aspirations to be repeated at the holy shrines, the formulæ to be told over on the beads; besides these first principles, the young Burman is taught the thin-kee-ya, the rules which are to prepare him for assuming the yellow robe, and to guide him during his longer or shorter withdrawal from the sinful world to the calm tranquillity of the monastery. He must learn that the young novice carefully imitates the decorous pace of the yahan; does not walk fast; avoids swinging his hands; does not smile or laugh in passing through a village, and keeps far away from all secular amusements. The yellow robe, distinctive of the order, is to be regarded not as a garment to cherish and comfort the wearer, not as a robe to adorn the outward man and make it look stately or pious, but merely as a concession to modesty, born of the weaknesses of poor human flesh—and further, as a means of enabling the worthless frame to endure the extremes of heat and cold. In the same way food is to be eaten only to support life. The member of the sacred order must not think of meal times as of an occasion for gratifying his senses; he must avoid dwelling on the tastiness of the food and the gratification to his palate which the pious zeal of a supporter may afford in presenting an unusually dainty meal. Especially must he refrain from eating food to make himself strong and lusty. He must always remember the transitoriness, the misery and unreality of the world, and find relief in the Triple Consolation, the trust in the Lord, the Law, and the Assembly.

All these things are impressed on the young pupil as soon as he is able to read at all, every one of them assuming the fact that as soon as he is old enough, or as soon as he has gone through the necessary preparation, he will assume the yellow robe of the devout, to wear it perhaps for life, perhaps only for a day or two, but certainly to put it on, for without this he cannot attain to the full privileges of a man. His kan (luck) will be altogether one-sided. All the ill deeds

he does will swell the sum of his demerits, but not a single good action, no uttermost act of charity or devotion, will be recorded to his advantage for another existence. Without admission to the order, without "Buddhist baptism," no man can count his present existence as other than an animal's. The great gift of having appeared in the likeness of a human being; the happy balancing of merits and demerits which has resulted in so glorious an opportunity of advancing towards Neh'-ban; the still greater fortune of existence in a country where the tenets of Buddhism offer supreme chances to the weary seeker after rest from the moil of a work-a-day world; all will have been recklessly thrown away. It is written that more hardly will a needle cast from the summit of Mount Myemmoh across the wide Thamohddaya Sea, more hardly will it touch with its point as it falls another needle standing point upwards in the great Southern Island, than will any given creature become a human being. How are the Western foreigners, black and white, to be pitied, who have indeed by earnest strivings attained the seat of man, but, arrived there, find it all naught because they do not hear the teachings of the Buddha! How much worse the Burman, to whom all his life long the monastery door stands open, to whom a week's, a day's, an hour's sojourn would offer boundless possibilities, and yet who enters not in. If this be so, what then can be the prospect for the boy who having put his hand to the plough turns back, who entering the monastery as a child, imbibes the religious thoughts and becomes acquainted with the religious creed, and yet fails to seek the "humanity" so easily to be gained? Better have been born an animal or an Englishman, and scoffed at what he did not understand.

Consequently it may be invariably assumed that the little scholar, as soon as age and acquirements admit, puts on the yellow garb as a finish to his education. This used to include every one. Till the English came and took the country, everybody went to the Pohn-gyee Kyoung. But now there are English government schools; there are Burmese laymen's schools, which neglect religious education altogether, and look to competitive examinations as the end and aim of juvenile existence, as the neh'ban of school life.

There is a percentage of thirty-five in the "middle standard" (Government Education Department). What matters if the successful halt and stumble in the pareht-gyee? There are two boys who have a chance in the Calcutta University Matriculation Examinations. It is a matter of indifference that the thingyoh is as unknown to them as it is to any poor foreigner. Nevertheless, notwithstanding their shortcomings in this respect, there are but few even of these young Burmans who have not become members of the society, if only for long enough to get their heads shaved and be invested with the yellow dress. Still in these latter years there are a few who have never gone through even this slight ceremony, and the number may be expected annually to increase as Western habits spread more widely over the country. Not till the monastic schools begin to be deserted will the Christian missionary find that his labours have had any effect on the vital energies of the ancient faith of the Buddha. That day is still far off. As yet the government and vernacular lay schools have had very little effect in reducing the number of scholars who go daily to study in the dim-lighted schoolrooms of the monastery. Not even in Rangoon have the monks to call for scholars; they flock there abundantly of their own accord.

## CHAPTER III

### BUDDHIST BAPTISM

THE term baptism as applied to a youth who enters a monastery in the state of probation (called shin) is not, as many people think, a mere idle analogy borrowed from the Christian faith. The novice actually and formally receives a new name to mark his accession to the full dignity of humanity. The great majority of shins, or ko-yins, are little boys of twelve or a little older, but occasionally a man secludes himself from the world at an advanced age. Till a Buddhist has entered the fraternity he cannot claim to be more than a mere animal. He has a loo nameh, it is true, a worldly name, but so might any ox, or horse, or elephant. It is not till he has subjected himself to the discipline of the kyoung that he can reap the fruits of a holy past and look forward to a more glorious future.

> The devils in the underworlds wear out
> Deeds that were wicked in an age gone by.

Man has less innocence than the animals, and cannot, like them, progress by merely omitting to sin. He may make golden stairways of his weaknesses indeed, but before he can do so he must abandon the world, if it is only for twenty-four hours. Then he becomes an oopathaka, a believer, and towards another life will hold the gain as well as answer for the loss in the present one, death casting up the debit or credit.

> Higher than Indra's ye may lift your lot,
> And sink it lower than the worm or gnat.

In recognition of this new-gained power the novice drops

his secular name and receives a bwè, an honorific title, to mark that it is now open to him to escape from suffering. The name lapses when he returns to the world again, but it is sufficient that he has once borne it. He may now add to his kan, and gain for himself a glorious new life by good works.

This is what is meant by calling the ceremony a baptism. The bwè are almost invariably Pali, or Burmanised Pali names, and follow the same rules with regard to initial letters as the loo nameh. Thus a Moung Poh Myat, born on Thursday, might take the name of Pyinya-Zawta, while the bwè of a Sunday child, Moung An, would be Adehsa. This religious or Buddhist (on the analogy of Christian) name is of course retained by the regular members of the monastery, and a monk is never addressed by any other when a name is used at all. When he becomes old an Oo is added, as Oo Adehsa, but it must not be forgotten that the use of a person's name in addressing him is considered very far from being polite in Burma, especially to one of rank and dignity such as a mendicant. On the other hand, one who has returned to the world never uses the bwè, not even when he accomplishes some great religious work such as the foundation of a pagoda, which according to a comforting belief ensures passage to Neh'ban after death.

The entry into the monastic order is therefore certainly the most important event in the life of a Burman, since only under the robe of the recluse and in the abandonment of the world can he completely fulfil the law and hope to find the way to eventual deliverance from the misery of ever-recurring existences. The popular time for the ceremony is just at the beginning of Wah, the Buddhist Lent, which lasts from July to October, roughly speaking. Strict Buddhists make their sons stay throughout the whole Wah. During that season feasts, though they do occur, are very much discountenanced, and dramatic performances are energetically denounced by the religious.

According to the letter of the law the intending probationers should have reached the age of fifteen, but this regulation has almost entirely lapsed in Lower Burma, among other reasons chiefly because that is just the most important age for the boy to be learning English and arith-

metic, with a view to getting situations under Government or in English merchants' offices. Therefore in the vast majority of cases shin-pyoo thee takes place at the age of twelve, or perhaps even a year earlier.

If the boy has been a scholar in the monastery beforehand, he is sure to be already prepared in all that is required of him. If not, he gets a few hasty lessons in the duties that will be incumbent on him. He must address a full member of the order in such and such language; he must walk decorously through the streets, keeping his eyes fixed on the ground six feet before him, and on no account gaze round him, no matter what exciting events may be going on; he must wear his thingan and doo-goot in the prescribed fashion; he must eat with dignity and circumspection, and so on. All these details are set forth in most minute fashion in a code. When he has mastered the most essential portions, and has also given proof of an acquaintance with the ordinary forms of worship, all is ready. His horoscope now comes into requisition, and a Baydin-Sayah or Pohnna is called in to determine a lucky day and hour from the za-dah. When this has been settled, three or four girls, the intending koyin-galay's sisters, or friends of the family, dress themselves up in their finest silks and jewels—often borrowing a large quantity of the latter—and go round the town, announcing to all relatives, friends, and neighbours when the induction will take place, and inviting them to the feast, presenting the little packet of le'-pet usual on such occasions. Almost all of these send some little present, either of money or victuals, to aid in the feast and make it as grand as possible. Not unseldom, if somebody else's son is also going to enter the kyoung and the town is not very large, the two join forces, while occasionally as many as half a dozen unite, especially if the families are not well off.

On the appointed day the young neophyte dresses in his finest clothes, and loads himself with all the family gold chains and jewellery, and as much more as he can borrow for the occasion. He then mounts a pony or gets into a richly decorated car. Shaded by gold umbrellas, allowed formerly on this occasion only in Upper Burma, except to those who had got a special patent for them from the sovereign, he

passes at a foot's pace through the village. A band of music goes before; all his friends and relatives crowd round him decked in their gayest; the young men dancing and singing vigorously; the girls laughing and smiling, with powdered faces and brilliant dresses. Thus he goes in succession to the houses of his relations to do them the obeisance due from a younger member of the family, and to bid them farewell. They in turn contribute money towards the expense of the band, and the solace of the supernumeraries. This triumphant march is meant to symbolise the moung-shin's abandonment of the follies of this world, and to recall Prince Theidat's last splendid appearance in Kapilawoot, amidst a crowd of rejoicing clansmen and subjects, just previous to his abandonment of family and kingdom to become a homeless mendicant ascetic, and to obtain the Buddhaship under the bawdee tree. When the round of visits has been duly carried out, the procession turns back to the parents' house, where in the meantime the final preparations for the induction and subsequent feast have been concluded. The head of the kyoung to which the young postulants are to be admitted, together with several of his brother monks, are seated at the back of the room on a raised dais, in front of which are ranged the presents intended for the mendicants—heaps of fruit, cooked food, mats, yellow cloth, and so on. The "Talapoins" seated in a row carefully hold up the large lotus-leaf-shaped fans before their faces to shut out from view the female portion of the assemblage. Never is the command to the holy community not to look on woman more necessary and more arduous to observe than at a shin-pyoo pwè. Burma's fairest daughters are assembled, bright in rainbow skirts and neckerchiefs, drowsy-scented flowers in the jetty tresses, jewellery flashing on the bosom, the fingers, and ears, the fragrance of thana'kah lingering over the smiling faces. Terrible trial it is for the young monk, if any such there be in the geing ohk's following, and more imperative the concentration of the mind on the Payeht Gyee and other portions of the sacred writ which are loudly chanted as the postulants return, and the assembly shekhoes to the pohn-gyees, and settles down to observe the proceedings. The

boy throws off all his fine clothes and jewellery, and binds a piece of white cloth round his loins. Then his long hair is cut off close to the head. Often the locks are as much as three or four feet long, and are carefully preserved by the mother or sister, the latter often making them up into ta-soo, the tails of hair twisted in with her own to increase the size of her sa-dohn—the knot of hair she wears at the back of her head. When the hair has been cut, the head is carefully shaved, the boy holding it over a cloth held by some of his relations. After this the head is washed in the usual way with a decoction of the seeds and bark of the kin-bohn thee, and rubbed well with saffron. A bath is then taken, and once more he puts on the bright pasoh, and repairs to the presence of the monks. Near at hand the parents have set ready the thingan, belt, ko-woot, and other yellow robes, the begging-pot and other requisites of the shin. The boy comes forward, prostrates himself three times, raises his hands joined in reverence, and begs, in a Pali formula got up by heart, to be admitted to the Holy Assembly as a neophyte, that he may walk steadily in the path of perfection, enjoy the advantages which result therefrom, and finally attain to be blessed state of Neh'ban. The kyoung poh-goh with his own hands gives him the garments; he is duly robed; the thabeht is hung round his neck by the strap, and then it is announced formally that he is a member of the monastery. He falls in among the other novices who have come with the mendicants. The abbot perhaps exhorts the assemblage for a short time, and then rising while all the people do obeisance, walks off slowly to the monastery, whither the newly-appointed ko-yins follow him, not unlikely helping to carry the presents which have been given at their induction.

The feast at the parents' house begins immediately, and of course ends in a pwè, which lasts till dawn. Sometimes, though this is very seldom the case even in Rangoon, the young probationer comes back again the same night and assumes the lay dress. This *pro forma* observance of the ceremony of baptism is, however, vehemently opposed by all the monks who are worth anything. A few boys remain only twenty-four hours in the yellow dress, long

enough to enable them to go once at least round the village begging from door to door in the train of the yahans. This naturally is very little better than leaving the kyoung immediately. It is considered hardly decent for the shin to leave under seven days of professed membership of the community. Some stay longer—a fortnight, a month, or two months; but all the more earnest believers insist that their sons shall remain at least one Wah, throughout the four months of Lent, in the rainy season. The best course for a fervent Buddhist, who nevertheless does not feel himself adapted for a monkish life, is to stay over three Wahs, one Lent for his father, one for his mother, and one for himself. It is on account of the importance of the Wah to the shin-pyoo that most inductions take place at the beginning of that season. Yahans count their seniority by the number of Lents they have spent in the kyoung. A mendicant of twenty Wahs must shekhoh to one of twenty-five, and so on. An individual who has left the holy community to re-enter the world is called a loo-twet, a runaway. On the other hand, a man who has been married, and has afterwards entered the monastery, goes by the name of taw-twet, one who has fled from the jungle of the world. The most revered yahans are those who have held steadfastly by the blameless, austere life of the fraternity since the time when they were first admitted as koyin-galay. Such are called ngè-byoo, white, or stainless from youth, and if they attain to advanced age are always sure of a most splendid ceremonial funeral, whether they have been celebrated for piety and learning or not.

If the shin-pyoo stays on in the kyoung, he continues the same course of studies as he began as a scholar. If he has not already learnt the Payeht Gyee and the Payah Shekho, Pali sermons and forms of worship, or the Mingala Thoht, the "Buddhist Beatitudes," he applies himself to them now. The most advanced pore over the metaphysical mysteries of the Abeedhamma Konit-gyan, the seven books of the most difficult part of the Beetaghat. These, with the Thingyoh and Thaddah, afford ample room for consideration to the longest life. The modern system of shortened sojourn in the kyoungs has led to very imperfect and limited know-

ledge of these treasuries of sacred knowledge. Formerly it used to be said that the man who did not know the Thaddah, the Pali "grammar," knew nothing. If this position were insisted on now, the number of ignorant people in Lower Burma would be somewhat startling.

But there are many difficulties before you get to the Abeedhamma and its cognate subjects. Even in the Payeht Gyee there is a section called Ta-zet, or Ta-zet-thoht, which has the credit of sending many a probationer back to the noisy, sinful world. According to the couplet—

Shin pyet ta-zet,
Loo pyet a-yet.

Brandy sends a man to hell;
Ta-zet spoils the saint as well.

It is a sort of religious *Pons Asinorum*.

Besides prosecuting his religious studies, the shin is required also to attend on the pohn-gyees and minister to their wants. He must lay before them at fixed times their daily food, the proper supply of water, the well-used betel-box, and whatever else the monk may require. He must of course go round every morning with the other members of the monastery, the begging-bowl strapped round his neck, accepting meekly, without word of thanks, or glance thrown to the right or left, even when he passes his father's house, the food poured in by the pious. When a pohn-gyee goes abroad the neophyte may be required to follow, carrying his fan or umbrella, or perhaps an arm-load of palm-leaf books, if a function is to be performed anywhere. According to the strict letter of the law the ko-yin ought to eat only of the food presented in the morning, but a very great laxity has crept in in this respect, not only with the neophytes, but even among the professed members of the order. It is no uncommon thing for the parents of the youth to send in daily a special meal for him, or even, in the case of wealthy families, actually to keep a cook on the monastic premises to prepare his food. Such sybaritism is not by any means uncommon in Lower Burma, though even there hardly approved of. In any good monastery in Upper Burma, or indeed in any monastery at all, even in Mandalay, it would be promptly

put a stop to. But where the monks themselves show the example of carnal weakness, the probationers cannot be expected to maintain the old austerity.

The shin is subject in every way to the discipline of the monastery, but there are very few additional rules really incumbent on him. He has to observe always the Sè-ba Theela, the ten commandments. Five of these are obligatory on all Buddhists at all times: the other five are supposed to be incumbent upon laymen only on sacred days and during Lent. The five universal commandments are:—

1. Thou shalt not take any life at all.
2. Thou shalt not steal.
3. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
4. Thou shalt not lie.
5. Thou shalt not drink intoxicating liquor.

The additional five are:

6. Thou shalt not eat after midday.
7. Thou shalt not sing, dance, or play on any musical instrument.
8. Thou shalt not use cosmetics, or colour the face.
9. Thou shalt not sit, stand, or sleep on platforms or elevated places not proper for thee.
10. Thou shalt not touch gold or silver.

These latter five are, it has been said, imposed upon laymen on sacred days, but the burden is very light, the people observing them or not, accordingly as they are observing the "duty-day." If they are not "keeping the feast," they conduct themselves precisely as they would on any other day, and buy and sell and attend pwès in their ordinary fashion.

This laxity is, of course, not open to the shins, but it cannot be said that the regulations, except perhaps as to eating, are very irksome. The seventh and eighth commandments seem by themselves peculiar, but they refer to filthy habits more explicitly set forth in the Pateemouk, or book of the enfranchisement, containing the 227 sins which a monk is liable to commit. The ninth refers to the

common Oriental dislike to any person of insufficient dignity occupying an elevated place physically above worthier people.

So far, then, the shin is not very grievously burdened in the monastery. But the discipline maintained is very strict. None of the ko-yins or of the boarder-pupils must be out of the monastic limits after the bell has rung. A lay scholar may get permission from the kyoung poh-goh to sleep at home now and again, but this indulgence is naturally impossible to the neophyte; he must always stay in the monastery. Again, the boarders may run home in the afternoon to get some dinner at their parents' houses, but this the shin cannot do. Breaches of the rules are very severely punished. The culprit's hands are tied high above his head to a post, and the castigator lays on vigorously on the naked back with a stout bamboo. Cases of deliberate cruelty of course occasionally happen, for human nature is the same everywhere, and a Dotheboys Hall is not an entire figment; but they are rare, and on the whole the shin is happy in the monastery, and occasionally in later life looks back with regret to the old, quiet, unruffled, careless life of the pohn-gyee kyoung.

In Upper Burma it has actually been his school, for but very few adopt the system of having private teachers to instruct their children; and in Lower Burma it probably contrasts favourably with the uncomfortable hard benches and desks of the English institution, and the still more irksome quietness demanded, and steady, prolonged application exacted by the English teacher. Those who have been to both remember most fondly the long dusky monastery schoolroom, where they sat on the floor and shouted out their lessons, and now and again slipped out into the air to take the stiffness out of their limbs with a quarter of an hour at chin lohn, Burmese football. In the English school you learned to make money; in the Burmese school you learned to be happy and contented.

# CHAPTER IV

## LIFE IN THE MONASTERY

A LITTLE before daylight, "when there is light enough to see the veins in the hand," that is to say, in Burma, at half-past five in the morning, in accordance with the deena chareeya, the whole monastic community rises, awakened by the sound of the kaladet. This is a big, oblong, trough-shaped bell, made of a piece of wood hollowed out, with little chiselled holes on the side. It is beaten with a wooden mallet, and makes noise enough to rouse the heaviest sleeper. The yahan then rinses out his mouth, washes his hands and face, arranges his dress, the same in which he has slept all night, and recites a few pious precepts, chief among which is the morning prayer: "How great a favour has the Lord Buddha bestowed upon me in manifesting to me his law, through the observance of which I may escape hell and secure my salvation."

There are always a few sleepy boarders, or shins, who have been indulging in the dissipation of whispered conversations till far into the night, whom nothing but a personal attack will awaken, but they are soon shaken up, and then the entire community arranges itself before the image of the Buddha, the abbot at the head, the rest of the brotherhood, pyin-sins, novices, and scholars, according to their order, and all together intone the morning service. This done, they each in their ranks present themselves before the kyoung poh-goh, and pledge themselves to observe during the day the vows and precepts incumbent upon them. They then separate for a short time, the pupils and shins to sweep the floor of the kyoung, and bring a supply of drinking water

for the day, filter it, and place it ready for use; the more advanced novices and others of full rank to sweep round the sacred trees and water them; the elders to meditate in solitude on the regulations of the order. Meditation is beyond all other actions meritorious. The first meditation of the day should be on the miseries of life and the conviction that we cannot free ourselves from them; such thoughts are honourable beyond the founding of a pagoda, or praying for the salvation of all living creatures. Some gather flowers and offer them before the pagoda, to impress upon the mind the virtues of the great teacher and the weaknesses and shortcomings of human nature.

Then comes the first meal of the day, a light refection usually preceded by a homily or grace, to the effect that the rice is eaten not to please the appetite, but to satisfy the wants of the body; that the yellow habit is worn not for vanity, but to cover nakedness; that they dwell in this house not for vainglory, but to be protected from the inclemency of the weather; that medicine is taken merely to recover health, and that health is desirable only that they may attend with greater diligence to prayer and meditation. After the meal all proceed to study for an hour. The ko-yins repeat what lessons they have learnt and apply themselves to new tasks. The early morning is considered especially favourable for committing to memory.

It is now close on eight o'clock, and, arranging themselves in Indian file, they set forth in orderly procession, with the abbot at their head, to beg their food. Slowly they wend their way through the chief street of the town or village, halting when any one comes out to pour his contribution of rice, or fruit, or vegetables, into the alms-bowl, but never saying a word, or even raising the eyes from the ground. It is they who confer the favour, not the givers. Were it not for the passing of the mendicants, the charitable would not have the opportunity of gaining for themselves merit. Not even a glance rewards the most bounteous donation. With eyes fixed unwaveringly on the ground six feet before them, and hands clasped beneath the begging-bowl, they pass on, solemnly meditating on their own unworthiness and the vileness of all human things. There are

naturally certain places where they receive a daily dole; but should the open-handed good wife have been delayed at the bazaar, chatting with her gossips, or the pious old head of the house be away on a journey, the recluses would rather go without breakfast than halt for a second, as if implying that they remembered the house as an ordinary place of call. It is a furlong on the noble path lost to the absentees, and the double ration of the following day is noted without a phantom of acknowledgment. So they pass round, circling back to the monastery after a perambulation lasting perhaps an hour or an hour and a half. Some mendicants, especially the more austere, return as soon as their thabehts are well filled; others apparently walk for a certain fixed time, and if the bowl is filled before this time is over, they empty it carefully on the side of the road. This is not wastry; the food is eaten by the dogs and birds of the air, and the merit to the givers is the same.

On their arrival at the monastery, a portion of all the alms they have received on the tour is solemnly offered to the Buddha, and then all proceed to breakfast. In former times, and according to the strict letter of the law, this ought to consist solely of what has been received during the morning; but a very great number of monasteries have, sad to say, fallen away from the strictness of the old rule. Only the more austere abbots enforce the observance of the earlier asceticism. Certainly in the great majority of the kyoungs of Lower Burma there is a man, not a monk, called kappee-yadayaka, or supporter, who provides for them a much more delicate and better dressed meal than they would have if they ate of the miscellaneous conglomerate turned out of the alms-bowl. That indiscriminate mixture of rice, cooked and raw; peas, boiled and parched; fish, flesh, and fowl, curried and plain, usually wrapped separately, in plantain leaves; cocoa-nut cakes and cucumbers; mangoes and meat; is very seldom consumed, in the larger towns at any rate, by any but the most rigidly austere. It is handed over to the little boys, the scholars of the community, or to any wanderers who may be sojourning in the kyoung, who eat as much of it as they can, and give the rest to the crows and pariah dogs. The abbot and the pyin-sin find a smoking hot

breakfast ready prepared for them when they return from their morning's walk, and are ready to set to with healthy appetites. This question of Sybaritism is a chief source of dispute between the rival sects of Maha and Soola-gandee.

Breakfast done, they wash out the begging-bowls, and chant a few lauds before the image of the Buddha, meditating for a short time on kindness and affection. During the succeeding hour the scholars are allowed to play about, but must not make a noise, or indulge in quarrelsome games; the religious pass the time in leisurely conversation, or in any other way they please; the kyoung poh-goh usually has visits from old people, who come to pay their respects, or perhaps the kyoung-tagah, the founder of the monastery, the patron of his benefice, comes to consult with him on various matters, or to converse about religion and good works. The etiquette observed on these occasions is always very stately and ceremonious. Whoever approaches, whether it be the poorest villager, the founder of the monastery, or the governor of the district, all alike must prostrate themselves three times before the yahan, and, with uplifted hands, say, "In order that all the sins I have committed, in thought, in word, or in deed, may be pardoned to me, I prostrate myself three times, once in honour of the Buddha, again in honour of the Law, and thirdly in honour of the Assembly, the three precious things. By so doing, I hope to be preserved from the three calamities, from the four states of punishment; and from the five enemies, fire, water, thieves, governors (literally translated burdens), and malevolent people." The sayah replies: "As a reward for his merit and his obeisances, may the supporter (tagah) be freed from the three calamities, the four states of punishment, the five enemies, and from harm of what kind soever. May all his aims be good and end well; may he advance firmly in the noble path, perfect himself in wisdom, and finally obtain rest in neh'ban." Whenever the visitor addresses the yahan he joins his hands together, and sitting as he does on a mat, slightly bends the body forward, applying the title of payah, or lord, and making use of the honorific forms of speech specially reserved for the religious. The mendicant on his part calls the layman, of

whatever rank, tagah, supporter, or, if the visitor be a woman, tăgama. Somehow or other these conversations, like the addresses of the religious to the people in the rest-houses, always seem to come round to the subject of the merit of almsgiving. The recluse will say that whatever is presented, silk robe, mattress, pillow, betel-box, is purified by the merit of the alms deed. The poor could fill the Lord Buddha's begging-bowl with a handful of flowers; the rich could not do so with a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand measures of grain. The path in the noontide heat is hard to one who has no sandals, and no water-gourd. What, then, will be the path after death to one who has not charity and regard for the ten precepts! Alms deeds can defend a man and protect him against the influence and the sources of demerits which are man's true enemies. Liberality is chief among the ten great virtues; it is the second of the three works of perfection; it is the absolute soul of the five renouncements. With all these a man becomes a Buddha, without them he sinks to be an animal, or worse still, to the fiery chambers of hell.

When the conversation is over the layman bows down three times again, saying, "My Lord's disciple does obeisance"; or Oo tin ba thee "places his forehead on the ground," rises, backs five or ten paces, and then turning on the right, as he would at the pagoda, departs. There may be quite a long succession of these visitors, and their respects are paid all through the afternoon, if the weather be not too hot.

At half-past eleven, however, there is another meal, usually a light refection of fruits, and this is the last of the day. The pyin-sin are expressly forbidden to eat after noon. Solid food taken after the shadows slope to the east endangers purity. The blood becomes heated, and, moreover, when the stomach is loaded the mind becomes overclouded and unfitted for meditation. It is worthy of remark that the religious must eat, as they walk, slowly and with gravity, only putting moderate-sized morsels into the mouth, and constantly bearing in mind that food is not intended for the gratification of the flesh, but for the nourishment of the body. The ceremony called a-kat must also be carefully observed, in accordance with the precise instructions laid

down in the Weenee. When a monk wants anything he must not go and get it for himself, nor direct any one in as many words to bring it to him. He must say to an attendant shin, or scholar, "Do what is lawful," whereupon the food is brought him, and the shin kneels down at a distance of a couple of feet, and, making the customary salutation, says, "This is lawful." The yahan then either takes it from his hand or directs him to place it within reach. The same ceremony is observed in everything, whether the religious wants water to wash his face or hands or to rinse out his mouth, or his sandals and fan when he goes out, or when offerings are made to him by the pious. The desire is of course to impart dignity to all the monk does, and to repress covetousness and inordinate carnal desires, and the custom dates from the very foundation of the order.

After the noontide meal all return to work again. A certain number undertake the teaching of the boys, who are at all stages of learning, from the children at the Thin-bohng-gyee, the spelling-book, up to the Ko-yins, who, in accordance with the law, are learning the Weenee, the Whole Duty of the Monk, by heart, with a view to abandoning the world and adopting the religious life. Others set to work to read old texts and the commentaries on them, or go to superintend the professional writers who are copying out manuscripts, carefully scratching on the palm-leaves with sharp steel style. The pyin-sin themselves never do anything of the kind. The writers are all professionals, laymen, and almost without exception from Upper Burma. The sadeik, the carved and gilded box containing the palm-leaf books, stands in the central room near the images, and often shaded by a sacred umbrella. When a learned sadaw makes notes, or writes a commentary of his own, he dictates it all to these copyists, who afterwards engross it. Most of the older members of the kyoung do, however, what an Englishman would call nothing, all the afternoon. They talk with whatever idlers —and there are always an abundance of them—come about the place, and then sink into meditation and many of the weaker of them into sleep. Meditation is the only path to the higher seats whereby a man becomes a yahanda, fit for Neh'ban, possessed of the six kinds of wisdom :—

1. The faculty of seeing like a nat or dewah.
2. The faculty of hearing like a nat.
3. Creative power.
4. Knowledge of the thoughts of others.
5. Freedom from passion.
6. Knowledge of one's own past existences.

They sit therefore for long hours fingering their rosaries, the beads made of the seeds of the *Canna indica*, "Indian shot," which sprang from Shin Gautama's blood, and repeating many times the prescribed formulæ, most often the Thamatawee Patthanah—All is changeful, all is sad, all is unreal; followed by the Tharana Gohng, the invocation of the Three Precious Gems, the Lord, the Law, and the Assembly. So by abstraction of the mind they hope to acquire the four laws of Edehpat:—

1. Absolute power over the will.
2. Absolute power over the mind.
3. Absolute power of execution.
4. Absolute power over the means to the object.

The discipline is terrible to all but a slow-minded man, and we can well imagine one who thus presents himself to the people as a living memento of all that is sacred and perfect in the religion, longing for the extinction of Neh'ban, where he may escape from the misery of recurring lives.

> Ask of the sick, the mourners, ask of him
> Who tottereth on his staff, lone and forlorn,
> Liketh thee life? These say, The babe is wise
> That weepeth being born.

So each one in the brotherhood passes the time each afternoon: some asleep, some racking the brain with mystical musings, some learning, some teaching, while throughout all sounds the din of the schoolroom, where the pupils are shouting out their tasks at the top of their voices.

Between three and four the lessons are finished, and the shins and scholars perform any domestic duties that may be required about the monastery. This done, the day-scholars go home and have their dinner, a few of the boarders perhaps gaining permission to do the same. The ko-yins, being

under monastic discipline, are obliged to fast like their superiors. Most of them, and some few of the pohn-gyees, go out for a staid and solemn walk round the village and out to the pagoda. Then, at sunset, the unmelodious, far-reaching notes of the kaladet summon all back to the kyoung. The strollers return immediately. None wearing the yellow robe may be without the monastery limits after the sun goes down, which occurs throughout the whole year close upon six o'clock. A short time afterwards the scholars are summoned before the abbot or some of the pohn-gyees and recite steadily all that they have learned, from the Thin-bohng-gyee up to the book they have last committed to memory. If the kyoung is large and there are a number of students, this thorough process is, however, modified, and only the work at the moment being learned is required of the pupils. The Pali rituals are chanted with spasmodic energy, abundance of sound in most cases doing duty for a just comprehension of the matter. Very few of the religious could string a sentence together in Pali, far less speak the language, yet most of them can pour forth homilies and dogmata for hours on end, so that the poor ko-yins are not to be scoffed at for their parrot-like volubility. When this examination is over, if the sayah is an enthusiast, or if there is time, that dignitary himself delivers a sermon, or gives an exposition of some knotty passage, or perhaps there is a general conversation on some question of doctrine, or other subject of ecclesiastical interest at the moment.

Thus the time passes away till half-past eight or nine, when the evening is closed with devotions in the presence of the image of the Buddha. All assemble according to their rank as in the morning, and together intone the vesper lauds. When the last sounds of the mournful chant have died away in the dimly-lighted chamber, one of the novices, or a clever scholar, stands up, and with a loud voice proclaims the hour, the day of the week, the day of the month, and the number of the year. Then all shekhoh before the Buddha thrice, and thrice before the abbot, and retire to rest. None who have experienced the impressiveness of this ceremonial, called the Thah-thanah-hlyouk, will readily forget the powerful effect it has on the feelings. It is the fit ending of a day

full of great possibilities for all. If the same routine gone through day after day becomes monotonous and loses some of its power for good, yet the effect of such a school, presided over by an abbot of intelligence and earnestness, must infallibly work for the good of all connected with it, and especially so in the case of an impulsive, impressionable people like the Burmese. As long as all the men of the country pass through the kyoungs, the teachings of Western missionaries can have but little power to shake the power of Buddhism over the people. The moral truths of both religions, Christianity and Buddhism, are practically the same, and who can give proof of aught else without calling in the aid of faith? The Burman is convinced that no other creed will suit him so well, and the number of monasteries in all parts of the country renders it easy for every one to obtain entrance for his children. The king sends his sons to the kyoung, and the poorest and most sinful wretch need not fear that his child will be turned away from the gates. Teaching is really all the pyin-sin do for the people; but it is precisely this moderate amount of teaching, revealing as it does to all the stern simplicity of the monastic life, that keeps the faith active in the country. Many monks are supremely lazy, but so are many of their fellow-countrymen, and if you are bidden by the Law to meditate deeply on the nature of mind and matter, of Nahm and Rupa, of Seht and Sehdathit, of Thissa and Zan, it is certain that you cannot be actively employed on other less important matters.

## CHAPTER V

### TATTOOING

WHATEVER his parents may think, the Burman youth considers the tattooing of his thighs quite as important a matter as his entry into a monastery. If he attains to the full dignity of humanity by becoming a shin, it is no less settled in his own mind that till he is tattooed in proper fashion there may be doubts as to his thorough manhood. Accordingly, very often at a tender age, varying with the spiritedness of his character, he begins to get figures tattooed on various parts of his thighs. When the operation is finished, the whole body from the waist, in a line with the navel, downwards to just beyond the knee-cap, is completely covered, the effect to the eye being not so much of a marking of the cuticle as of a skin-tight pair of *caleçons*, fitting better than the best glove ever made. The origin of the custom may or may not be the shameful reason assigned by foreign writers. No true Burman believes it. But in any case the tattooing looks very well on the olive skin, and I have heard English ladies admire it. The custom will probably never die out. There are, it is true, not a few puny Rangoonites, spiritless sons of the town, who do not get tattooed, but they are ashamed of it and take every opportunity of concealing their weakness. But there is not a single up-country man, not a solitary taw-thah, the sturdy inhabitants of the small towns and villages, who is not decorated with the dark blue tracery. They would as soon think of wearing a woman's skirt as of omitting to be tattooed, and they are strengthened in the feeling by the opinion of the girls themselves.

The operation is not by any means pleasant. In fact in

places such as the tender inside parts of the thigh and at the joints of the knee, it needs more stoicism than most youths can command, to endure it without relieving the mind in speech. Therefore it is common to put the boy under the influence of opium while it is being done, though some parents will not allow this, for cases have occurred where the youth has died of an over-dose. For the same reason it is very seldom that more than three or four figures are done at a time. The part swells up a good deal, and there is danger of fever; besides that a few days afterwards the itchiness which supervenes is almost as intolerable as the first tattooing, while if the skin is broken by scratching there is not only a nasty sore, but the figure is spoilt. You not uncommonly hear of cases where the whole surface was finished at one sitting, but you only hear of them because it is unusual, and because the youth is proud of it.

The instrument used is a pricker about two feet long, weighted at the top with a brass figure, sometimes plain, but in the case of good sayahs, always carved more or less elaborately in the figure of a bird, a nat, or a beeloo. The yat, or style part, is solid, with a round, sharp point, split up into four by long slits at right angles to each other, which serve to hold the colouring matter. This style is about four inches long and fits into a hollow pipe, which again joins it to the weighted end. Thus the length required for free work is gained without too great weight, except where it is wanted. The tattooer catches the pricker with his right hand, and guides the point with a rest formed by the forefinger and thumb of his left, the hand resting firmly on the person's body. The say used is lampblack, the best being that obtained by the burning of sessamum oil, and this is mixed with water as it is wanted. Good sayahs always sketch the outline of the figure roughly on the skin with an ordinary camel's-hair brush, and then the pattern is executed with a series of punctures close together, forming what afterwards fades into a rough line. Skilful men are very quick at it. I have had fifteen figures done in little over half an hour. But then Sayah Chehn is a celebrated man.

The figures tattooed are those of all kind of animals, tigers, cats, monkeys, and elephants being the commonest,

while nats, beeloos, and compound animals called tiger-beeloos are also frequent. Each representation is surrounded by a roughly oval tracery of a variety of letters of the alphabet, which form a curious and remarkably effective frame. Thus each animal has a setting of its own. Vacant spaces are filled up in a similar way, and the top and bottom are finished off with a scolloped line. Sometimes these letters are asserted to have a cabalistic meaning, but ordinarily no greater virtue is claimed for them than that of beauty. Mystic squares and ladder-step triangles of serious import are often added in vacant spaces, but all the more important and valid charms are reserved for other parts of the body and for special execution, usually too in vermilion. The old style, and that which prevails still in jungle districts, was to cover every available piece of skin with tracery, so that the figures became blurred and indistinct, and on a dark skin grown old were practically not visible without careful examination, which, considering the portion of the body, was embarrassing to both parties. The newer style, and that specially affected by those with a white skin, is to sacrifice mass of colour to distinctness of outline. The best sayahs carry about sample-books with them containing clever drawings, from which the patient may select the patterns he likes best, and mark their relative positions before he takes the opium. But tigers, cats, monkeys, and beeloos always predominate. To fill up space, and for greater certainty, the name of the animal is often added in the figure, after the style of juvenile art on slates, or with a piece of chalk on blank hoardings.

The Shans tattoo even more extensively than the Burmans. The figures are carried down well over the calf of the leg and above the navel, while from the upper line tattooed rays run up to the chest and at the back, after the fashion of a rising sun, almost to the nape of the neck. Mostly all the men who tattoo charms and cabalistic figures are Shans. They claim and are allowed a special skill in such matters, and as they mutter spells and incomprehensible incantations over the "medicine," are looked up to with profound belief and a very considerable deal of awe.

The tattooing on the loins and legs is universal with all

Burmans, and nothing more is ordinarily required; but there are very few who have not charms of some kind tattooed on the arms, back, chest, or even on the top of the head, which is shaved for the purpose. These figures are of all kinds—lizards, birds, mystic words and squares, rings, images of the Buddha, and sometimes merely a few scattered dots, the latter especially on the face, between the eyes, over the ears, or on the chin. The colouring matter is almost always vermilion, with drugs and solutions, according to requirement, mingled with it. The blue dye from the lampblack never disappears, but the red colour of the vermilion gradually fades away and vanishes. Nevertheless figures of this kind, more or less distinct, are to be found on Burmans of all ages, so great is the national superstition. Even the town youths, whose limbs are smooth and "unbreeched" as a girl's, are never without some charms of this kind, if it is only the a-noo say, which enables a man to gain the woman he loves. This "drug of tenderness" is composed of vermilion mixed with a variety of herbs and curious things, prominent among which is the bruised, dry skin of the toukteh, the trout-spotted lizard, whose sonorous cry and fidelity to the house where he establishes himself and brings luck, are well known to all who have visited Burma. It is very sparingly used, a few round spots arranged in the shape of a triangle being of sufficient virtue to ensure the object aimed at. The commonest place for them is between the eyes, but occasionally the say sayah recommends the lips, or even the tongue, and his advice is always followed. This is the only tattooing which women ever have executed on them, and there are not many of them who have it done. The patient is usually a love-sick maiden who is afraid the object of her affection will escape from her, or a girl whom rolling years warn that she must be quick if she would not be condemned to remain an a-pyo heing, an old maid. Except in very desperate cases, however, they always manage to persuade the operator to place the charm on some part of the body where it will not be visible. If it is not effectual, there is always open to them the signal afforded by kindly national custom to maidens longing for a mate. They cut off the lappets of hair, the byah-bazan, hanging over the ears,

and the significance is the same as the white heather of the language of flowers, "heart for sale." In Rangoon the tattooing of a woman has a special signification, not recognised elsewhere. It means that she wants an Englishman for a husband. Poor thing!

Another very universal kind of tattooing is that with a-hpee say. Almost every schoolboy in the country has a specimen of this on him, for does it not prevent him from feeling the pain when he is caned? No amount of falsified hopes in the experience of friends will persuade him that it may not be effectual in his case, and a flogging is often courted as an immediate test of its efficacy. Pride repels the inquiries of chums as to the results, but the experimenter is usually very well behaved for some time. In the case of older men the a-hpee say acts as a talisman against bullets, sword cuts, and ills of that kind. Allied to this are the thaynat hpee, which soldiers and dacoits carry about with them. These are the horns of buffaloes and other animals, which may be plain, but are usually elaborately carved with figures according to fancy. They must be quite solid down to the root. A hollow or flaw of any kind deprives them of their virtue. While the man has such a talisman in his hands he cannot be killed. A monkey is a very favourite image to have carved in this way on a sword or dagger hilt, the reference being to the tale of the Ramayana. Of a similar nature are talismans which are especially used by soldiers and dacoits. These hkoung-beht-set are charmed or consecrated objects let into the flesh under the skin. They are of various kinds. Some are gold, silver, or lead; others curious pebbles, pieces of tortoise-shell, or bits of horn, all of them with incantations of mystic character written on them. Many famed dacoits have long rows and curves of them over the chest, showing in little knobs through the skin. When they get into English prisons, an energetic jailer has been known to cut them out, lest they should be pieces of gold or silver, or perhaps precious stones, with which the turnkeys might be bribed. The usual result is to break the robber's spirit. Once the continuity is interrupted the consecration is gone. More peaceable people wear necklaces or bracelets of such

talismans in the belief that they are thus proof against malignant witches and necromancers. Most Englishmen in Burma, who are on friendly terms with the people, have been asked to test the virtue of such a charm, by firing at it tied up in a handkerchief. If the incantation is valid the handkerchief will be unharmed, though the muzzle of the pistol be held up to it. In such a case the pistol will burst.

Another kind of tattooing is the moay say, which guards against danger from snake bite. Similarly the a-kweh a-kah, the shielding, or defending drug, renders harmless the spells of wizards and geomancers, and keeps far away evil spirits of every kind. But the most hideous and weird of the superstitions about tattooing is that connected with the a-kyan say. There are but very few sayahs who are acquainted with the necessary drugs and incantations, and fewer people still who have the courage to submit to the operation, for many men are pointed out whose mind has given way under the gruesome process, and who wander about graveyards, gnashing their teeth and fumbling about for human bones to gnaw and mouth. And no wonder, for some tattooers make them chew the raw flesh of a man who has been hanged, while the figure is being tattooed on the breast. Those who go through the operation are called Baw-dee-thah-da. Some become Baw-dee-thah-da without knowing it, and without the sickening necessity of mumbling human flesh like a ghoul. I knew an instance in a monastery. The patient was a boarder about fourteen years of age. A Shan tattooer wandering about the country spent a couple of nights in the kyoung, and the boy, attracted by the fellow's eerie tales, managed to save up a good many tit-bits for him from the food going in the monastery. Out of gratitude, and having nothing better to give him, for he was very poor and homeless, the sayah tattooed on the lad a figure with singular drugs, muttering queer phrases the while. Then he went away saying no more than that it would make the boy very strong. In about a month's time the boarder displayed unmistakable signs of being a Baw-dee-thah-da. He leapt enormous heights in the air, jumped about and ran at random, carried with the utmost ease things which no one

else could move. The abbot locked him up in a sadeik, the box in which the palm-leaf manuscripts were kept; he got out without injuring the lock in any way, sprang on to the roof of the monastery, forty feet high, and turned a somersault to the ground without hurting himself in the least. He had been a boy of very soft, easy temper, and now he became fiery and uncertain, and with his vast strength, very dangerous. He only calmed down when a monk preached the law to him. He was constantly doing marvellous things; one day he walked across the river in front of the monastery, holding a monk's ohk, or food canister, in his hands. The depth of the water was over six fathoms, but it did not reach higher than his waist. On another occasion a tree which was being cut down fell on him. He sank into the ground and came forth quite uninjured. After some years his parents took him to Magway in Upper Burma. There he fell into bad courses and became a dacoit. This was terrible for his family in a special way, because in native territory if they cannot catch the dacoit they seize all his friends and relations and put them in jail till they can get hold of the real culprit, and no one can lay hands on a Baw-dee-thah-da. At last, however, he was restored to his right mind. A holy ascetic came across him, soothed him with the payeht gyee, and then with a rusty nail and sacred medicines, tattooed out the figure put on with such lamentable results by the Shan sayah. The quondam Baw-dee-thah-da is now a staid and respected broker in the employ of one of the best known English rice firms in Rangoon. He was fortunate; most Baw-dee-thah-das have to be killed in their sleep.

But though Baw-dee-thah-das are very rare, charmed tattooing is not, and there are some fast young men who seem almost to make picture galleries of themselves with emblems and patterns all over their chests, arms, backs, and the calves of their legs. The colour gradually dies away until at last nothing remains but the blue breeches. These really look well, and they last a man to his dying day.

The following recipes and formulæ to be repeated

during tattooing are taken from a Mandalay tattooer's book :—

For an a-noo say: "I was Koothah Min, I. At the time when Papawadee was my queen, when I routed the kings of all the seven countries who came suing for her hand. Right beautiful was she, fair as the malla flower when it perfumes the forest with its odours. I the great Koothah Yaza."

This is to be repeated seven times at various stages in the operation. Koothah Yaza is the hero of one of the 510 Zahts, detailing the previous births of the Lord Buddha.

For an a-hpee say: "Steal gold from the pagodas, fine, bright gold. Refine it in the fire and repeat the magic words in the house, on the lonely path, before the lucky star, at the pagoda; repeat them a thousand times save one. Consecrate the water, draw the circle of the flying galohn. Put it under the left arm, under the right arm. No harm will befall thee, safe and invulnerable."

"A parrot tattooed on the arm will give great favour with princes."

"Take a length of bamboo or of rattan the size of a joint of the merchant's finger, and repeat, pressing your foot against the tha-byay tree, Nat-thah wa-pa, wa-pa nat-thah na. Repeat this seven times and put the joint in your mouth when you are in danger. There is no better thay-nat hpee."

The merchant's finger (let thoo-guwè) is the third—that on which rings are worn. The forefinger is called let-hnoh. Hnoh means to hate, but whether this is the meaning or not —as it were "the finger of scorn"—I do not know.

"Repeat sa ba pa wa wa ba pa wa with the tooth of the wild boar in your palm, with the wild boar's ear as you know. Draw the circle with pure red gold. Draw in it a nagah; then draw sideways the figure of a flying lion. Write round it om gyoo-loo gyoo-loo thwa ha ya. Then carry rice, fresh water, betel, tobacco, and le'pet to the pagoda and heap them together. When you have repeated a thousand times the words of the encircling gahtah (spell) put it below the skin. But be careful not to give it to the

first man who asks for it. It is very powerful." This is another a-hpee say.

Certain stones called amaday, said to be found in the heads of birds, in trees, and in animals, are highly prized as amulets. They will guard from musket shots, or sword thrusts, from painful blows, or evil spirits. Hmaw sayahs always have them. When they are placed on a child's face, or introduced into any one's blood, nat thwin thee, they introduce a spirit. The person so possessed falls into a trance, and may be questioned as to the doings of any other evil spirits in the neighbourhood.

Letters placed in the magic squares and triangular "in" are la-gyee, na-gyee, ka-gyee, ga-gyee (great *l*, great *n*, great *k*, and great *g*). Other very powerful s'mah, as these tattooed letters are called, are "round" sa, wa, la, and "bottom-indented" da. The arm is a favourite place for them.

The belief of every Burman in the efficacy of these tattooed charms is practically ineradicable. In 1881, in Rangoon, a young man had the figure of the great Peguan byeing, the "paddy-bird," a species of egret, tattooed upon him. This was to be as efficacious in preserving him from drowning as a child's caul used to be considered by British sailors. When it was finished, he suggested that an immediate experiment should be made. Accordingly his hands and feet were tied, and he was tossed over the side of a boat into the river. The under-currents in the Rangoon river are very dangerous, and the poor fellow was never seen again. The tattooers, master and assistant, were brought up on a charge of murder, and convicted of man-slaughter, but the great mass of the Burman population thought they were very hardly treated, and that the fact of an unlucky side-wind, some mischance in the calculation from the horoscope, the machinations of an evil-disposed person against the deceased, or something of that kind, which had caused the lamentable issue, ought never to have led to the conviction of the skilled sayahs. That they were charlatans was never once hinted.

# CHAPTER VI

## EAR-BORING

THE first great event in a Burmese girl's life is the nah-twin mingala, the boring of her ears. She is not out of the doll stage till that happens. She may have toddled after her mother to the market with a basket of fruit on her head, long before the ear-boring, but that ceremony is as much an epoch to her as putting on the yellow robe, or getting his legs tattooed, is to her brother. Ever afterwards she will look upon every male as a possible lover. No more taking alternate whiffs at a big green cheroot with little Moung Poh; no more teasing Poh Shun to let her have a taste of those fine nettè mangoes his father has got down from Mandalay; no more dawdling about the streets by herself, watching the small boys playing with the round gohn nyin seeds, or having a hurried glimpse of the puppet play, while she is supposed to be at home looking after the house with her little brother. When she walks out now it will be with her mother, or an aunt, or married sister, as a chaperone; and if she goes to the play it will be in formal procession, and with all her finest clothes on. Nothing like getting the ears bored to set a girl thinking about the wave of the hair that falls down in lappets by her ears, or the best recipe for the fragrant straw-coloured thanakah, with which she tints her face and charms half the senses of the gallants. It even alters her walk. She sets about practising the coquettish sway of the body in walking, which is considered so attractive, and which a philosophical matter-of-fact Darwinian would probably declare was first of all due to an involuntary throwing out of the heel with each step to keep the folds of the dress

modestly closed in front, and to prevent the dainty slipper, just covering her toes and no more, from slipping off the foot. However that may be, it is an accomplishment indispensable to a Burmese belle. She takes as much pains over it as she does with her jetty tresses. In a word, the nah-twin mingala transforms the girl into a woman, just as much as admission to a monastery makes the boy a man. It is her baptism, and is the distinctive mark of her race. Most of the men get their ears bored too, but the ceremony is not so solemn with them, and latterly is not so universal, at any rate not in British Burma.

The ceremony takes place at the age of twelve or thirteen, just when the girl has attained puberty in fact. Her za-dah is submitted to a soothsayer, that a fortunate day and hour may be chosen, and that being fixed, a great feast is prepared, and all the friends of the family and the relations are invited. An invitation to an ear-boring feast is a very urgent matter. No one can refuse without a very good excuse, and serious business is often postponed to the demands of such a ceremony. Everybody comes early, and sits down in any place he can find round about the front part and sides of the room, the girl, with all her female relatives about her, reclining on a mat at the back. The baydin sayah stalks about gazing at a mysterious strip of palm-leaf, or apparently wrapped in deep thought. Beside him is the professional ear-borer. He carries the needles, which are almost always pure gold, and even in the case of the poorest, never of any baser metal than silver. Rich people very often have them set at the ends with precious stones. At last the soothsayer gives the sign that the favourable moment has arrived. The ear-borer moves up immediately and passes the needles through the lobe of the ear, sometimes using a cork as they do in England, but more often letting them pass between two of his fingers. The girl, who has been worked up into a high state of excitement and terror by all the preparations, usually struggles and shrieks as hard as she can, but the women round about hold her down, and the band of music in the street outside strikes up a rapid movement

and drowns her lamentations, while all the visitors burst into a flood of talk and reminiscences of other ceremonies of the kind that they have witnessed. Usually the gold needle is bent round and left in the wound, but poor people sometimes pass a piece of string through and tie it. This is turned round and passed backwards and forwards daily till the sides heal, and then begins the process of enlarging the hole to receive the na-doung, a big tube an inch long and from half an inch to three-quarters in diameter. This takes a very long time, and is less pleasant even than the first boring. Some do it with a gold or thickly gilt metal plate, which is rolled up and passed through the hole. The elasticity of the metal makes it constantly tend to expand, and so the hole is gradually enlarged. A commoner method, however, is by introducing stems of the keing, or elephant grass. As many of the little stems of the inner blade as will go through are passed in, and daily their number is added to until a considerable width is attained. When keing grass is not available, little splints of the thet-ngeh-kyoung are made use of. This is the ordinary thatch of the poorer sort of houses, and almost universal in the country districts, but forbidden in the large towns, on account of its inflammable character. Then, after a time, the nah-kat is brought into use. This is a curious ear-plug, big at both ends, and smaller in the middle, where the two parts screw into one another. The screw is passed through the lobe of the ear, and the other portion is then twisted on. These nah-kat are gradually increased in size, until at last the orifices are large enough to receive the na-doung, the regular ear-cylinders. These are of various make and material, the latter being formerly regulated by the sumptuary laws in independent territory. The royal family, both males and females, had them of gold, richly set with jewels, often a single large brilliant in front, or a diamond surrounded by a ring of emeralds, while the back was a cluster of rubies. The right to wear these was also extended to the higher ministers and their families. Others wear them of gold, plain hollow tubes, or with the ends filled up with delicate *repoussé* work. Those who cannot afford this content themselves with solid amber plugs, which, when

they are without a flaw, are worth three or four pounds sterling a piece. Finally, the poor content themselves with hollow pipes of glass, coloured in a variety of tints. The shape is somewhat peculiar, a slight irregular concave, if I may be allowed the expression, the front being a little larger in diameter than the back. Some of the princesses wear very costly na-doung, the diamonds, and especially the rubies, for which Burma is celebrated, being exceedingly fine. The men, except those of high rank, very seldom wear them, unless on exceptional feast days. Women ordinarily put them on whenever they go out. Poor people keep the holes open with a roll of paper or cloth. A *chic* damsel very often courts attention by carrying spare cheroots dangling from her lobes. Elder women who subordinate personal appearance to bodily comforts usually do the same thing on a journey. It secures them a smoke whenever they may want it, and the huge green cheroots are not easily carried in the penetralia of the Burmese female dress, while if they were in the travelling box, they might be abstracted by unscrupulous youngsters.

It is curious to notice how much the custom is falling into disuse in British territory with the men. Even among the wealthier classes you seldom see a man wearing a na-doung of the largest size. Those of the thickness of a pencil or a little less are still common, but they too probably will pass out of use shortly. Yet this used to be looked upon as the distinctive mark of Burmese nationality. Probably, nowadays, the tattooing is considered sufficient; while the ear-plugs were certainly inconvenient things, and afforded obvious attractions to robbers. But with the women ear-boring is still universal, and probably will continue so as long as the men go on tattooing, notwithstanding the pain of the process. The na-doung are as characteristic of the Burmese women as the flapping tamehn.

# CHAPTER VII

## MARRIAGE

In the Lawkaneedee, the book of proverbs relating to ordinary life, it is said that monks and hermits are beautiful when they are lean; four-footed animals when they are fat; men when they are learned; and women when they are married. This recommendation to the married state is no more needed by Burmese maidens than it is by their sisters in other parts of the world, and they have the further inducement that they enjoy a much freer and happier position than in any other Eastern country, and in some respects are better off even than women in England. All the money and possessions which a girl brings with her on marriage are kept carefully separate for the benefit of her children or heirs, and she carries her property away with her if she is divorced, besides anything she may have added to it in the interim by her own trading or by inheritance. Thus a married Burmese woman is much more independent than any European even in the most advanced states. In the eyes of the Dammathat the old idea of the *patria potestas* prevails indeed, and woman is regarded as a simple chattel, belonging entirely to her parents, and to be disposed of by them without any reference to her personal inclinations; but, as a matter of fact, she may do pretty well as she pleases, may marry the youth on whom she has fixed her affections, and may separate herself from the husband who has offended her, by going before the village elders and stating her case; and if the complaint is just, her request is never refused.

As yet they have not begun to demand an equal share

of education with the boys, and the only accomplishments most Burmese girls know are how to dress neatly, do up their hair, and powder their faces. This is the single open implication of their inferiority—except in worship at the pagoda, when every woman will pray that in another existence she may be a man—and it is not likely that female education will make much progress for another generation, the popular idea in Burma being that learning is no use to a girl when she has it, and she may, consequently, as well devote all her spare time to making herself look as pretty as possible. Here and there are a few who are deeply learned in Burmese literature. The young wife of one of the most prominent living Burman pleaders in Rangoon has as good a knowledge of the sacred books and as great a fluency in repeating Pali rituals as any pohn-gyee in the country. But the great majority of girls only know what they pick up from the conversation of their brothers and the men who come about the house. It is therefore greatly to their credit that they manage not only house affairs, but their husband's business into the bargain. A farmer's wife will carry out the sale of the whole rice crop to the agent of an English rice firm in her husband's absence, and generally strikes a better bargain than he would have made himself. If the village head constable is away, the wife will get together the policemen, stop a fight, arrest the offenders, and send them off to the lock-up all on her own responsibility. The wife sits by, no matter what public business is being transacted, and very often puts in her own opinion quite as a matter of course; in fact, she is virtual master of the house, and henpecked husbands are not by any means uncommon, King Theebaw himself furnishing a notable instance. There never was a king of Burma before who remained for three years the husband of one wife. It is not inclination in his case. He has had quite a number of *amourettes;* but the sturdy Soo-payah Lat and her formidable mother soon get the offending damsels out of the way.

According to the Laws of Menu there are three ways in which a marriage can be brought about:—

1. When the parents of the couple give them to one another.

2. When they come together through the good offices of a go-between, called an oungthwè.

3. When they arrange the matter between themselves.

It is understood, of course, that the two latter forms require at least the passive consent of the father, or, if he is dead, of the guardian, mother, brother, sister, uncle, or whoever it may be; every woman—every young woman at any rate—being necessarily under the protection of somebody. The Dammathat says: "Let the man to whom she is given by her nearest relation be her husband. If the parents or the relations of the girl do not give her away, and she is carried off against their will, even if she has had ten children, they have power to cause her to separate from the man and give her to another; the man has no right to say that she is his wife. Why is this? Because a daughter belongs to her parents?" But, on the other hand, "If a young woman runs off with a young man not approved by her parents, and, having concealed herself for some time, shall return to the village or neighbourhood in which her parents live, and have two or three children, or live there five or ten years with the man after her parents have seen and known of her being there, they shall not have power to cause her to separate from her husband."

According to the old system, the young man was not considered of age to marry till he was twenty-four or twenty-five. The age of the girl was always a matter of no consequence as long as she had attained to puberty. When a youth wanted to marry he told his parents, and they went to the father and mother of the young woman of his choice. If these had no objections, then the young man kept company with the girl, had the run of the house for two or three years, so that they might get to know one another well, and then, if they were still of one mind, the question of dowry was settled, a fortunate day and hour fixed upon, and the marriage carried out. Nowadays such formalities are almost entirely dispensed with. If the parents of both houses are agreeable, the contracting parties get married with most ardent lover-like rapidity. The age too has become very much younger. Most lads get married when they are eighteen or nineteen; thirteen or fourteen is a common age

for the girls. Runaway marriages are common enough, and though the parents may be angry, they are usually too easy-going and indolent to take any energetic action in the matter, and let the couple find out their mistake and come and ask for pardon and a house to live in, which is seldom refused. Occasionally in Lower Burma a stern father demands that they shall be separated until the lad has got a situation for himself, but this is ordinarily little more than a mere form of speech. In Upper Burma, where food is scarce and working hands more valuable, the husband is brought to the girl's parents' house and made to do his share towards supporting the household.

The preliminary courting is naturally conducted in the old fashion, best known to those who have had experiences of their own in such matters. The parties meet at pwès, the girl perhaps selling cheroots, fried garlic, le'pet, and what not, and therefore being readily accessible to any swain. It must not be supposed that keeping a stall is regarded as anything derogatory. Numbers of perfectly well-to-do women set them up regularly; some even have daily work in the bazaars, and very often a girl commences occupations of the kind with the view of attracting the young men and securing a husband. Then there are meetings at pagoda feasts, in the zayats and at friends' houses, so that there are plenty of chances of introduction to eligible *partis*, even without calling in the assistance of the oungthwè. This functionary makes it a regular occupation to know all the eligible young women in the place, and for a small consideration, or sometimes merely for love of his trade, brings young couples together and arranges places of meeting for them. He is of course most useful where an impecunious youth aspires to the hand of a rich merchant's or high official's daughter. He manages an introduction in a roundabout way to avoid rousing suspicions, praises his client's appearance and abilities, contrives a series of unexpected meetings, and does everything, in fact, to further the project. There are regular practitioners in the business, and others who dabble in it for want of something to do and from sheer love of scheming.

Courting, whether authorised by the parents or not, is

very seldom carried on in daylight. So much is this the case that the phrase Loo-byo hlè thee a-chehn, "Courting time," is commonly used in ordinary conversation to designate nine o'clock at night, or a little before or after. The time may be due to the fact that occupation, or the heat, prevent it during the day, but there is an old saw which may account for it, to the effect that in the morning women are cross and peevish; in the middle of the day they are testy and quarrelsome; but at night they are sweet and amiable. Authorised courtship, if the term may be allowed, is always carried on at this time, and preparations for it are duly made by the girls. A couple of hours after nightfall the lover, with a friend or two, makes his appearance near the house and dawdles up and down till he finds the old people have gone to bed, or retired from the scene. Then he goes up the steps along with his supporters and finds the girl alone, or with a companion or two, dressed in her best, with flowers in her hair, powder on her cheeks and neck, and generally prepared for conquest. The old people are never present, though they can hear everything, and the mother, as I am credibly informed, pouk-kyee thee, has a convenient chink in the bamboo walls through which she can survey operations and prevent too ardent love-making. Interviews vary in length, and the nature of the conversation may be best left to the imagination. If one of the accompanying young men has also an appointment that evening he naturally endeavours to curtail his friend's philandering as much as possible, in order that he himself may have the more time in another place to press his suit. Even in clandestine flirtations the courting is always effected in a formal way like this. Meetings in lover's loans, or *à quatre yeux*, would ruin a girl's character immediately.

Little presents are exchanged. The *soupirant* brings a gay kerchief with some love-verses written on it, perhaps his own composition, more probably the erotic sighings of the prince in the last play he heard, or cribbed bodily from a song-book for Kahla-thahs. The girl gives him some green cheroots, rolled by her fair hands, or a brilliant woollen muffler which she has knitted; but there is never any of the kissing and caressing indulged in by more demonstrative

foreign lovers. The girl would look upon any attempts of such a nature as highly indecorous.

When at last everything has been settled—parents' consent obtained, dowry fixed, and a fortunate day and hour pitched upon—the marriage ceremony comes off in the house of the bride's parents. The ritual is very simple and has nothing whatever of a religious character about it; in fact the celibate pohn-gyees would be grossly scandalised if they were asked to take any part in it. A great feast is prepared at the expense of the bridegroom or his parents. All the relations, friends, and neighbours are invited, and in fact it is the publicity of the thing that is the main feature of the ceremony. The old custom that the bride and bridegroom should join their right hands together, palm to palm, in the presence of all the assembled guests, and then should eat rice out of the same dish and feed each other with one or two morsels in turtle-dove fashion, has in many cases died out, and the eating and drinking, the talk of the men in the main room of the house and of the women in the inner apartment, is quite enough to solemnise the union. When the newly-married couple retire into the bridal chamber it is sometimes in the larger towns the custom to shower saffron-coloured rice on them, but this, like the entire seclusion in which the happy pair are supposed to pass the next seven days, is very seldom actually carried out.

In the country villages, however, two ancient customs are still very generally prevalent. The one is to tie a string across the road along which the bridegroom must pass to the house of his intended. He comes in procession with all his friends, carrying the greater portion of the belongings with which he intends to set up house; a bundle of mats, a long arm-chair, a teak box, mattresses, pillows, besides materials for the feast and presents for the bride. The people who have put up the string—called the gold or silver cord—usually young men intent on a jollification of their own, stop the happy man, and threaten to break the string with a curse on the married couple unless some money is given them. It is simple extortion, and English district officers sometimes forbid it. Nevertheless the speculation is

usually successful. I suppose no one feels very niggardly on his marriage day.

The other custom is much more singular, more ancient, and infinitely more disagreeable. On the night of the marriage a band of the young bachelors of the place come and shower stones and sticks on the roof of the house where the happy couple are, keeping up sometimes such a sustained battery that the thatch or wooden shingles suffer materially, while the furniture and even the inmates occasionally do not escape injury. In Lower Burma the lads are usually bought off with a sum of money, and where the officials do not interfere to prevent it, the custom has degenerated into a system of extortion. Not a few law-suits have sprung out of such sieges. The money paid in toll to this horseplay goes by the name of kè-boh, and is supposed to be devoted by the receivers to making offerings at the pagoda, but the young men nowadays use it entirely for their own entertainment. In Upper Burma the black mail is never demanded, and consequently Father San Germano was puzzled to conceive any reason for the extra-ordinary practice. Captain Forbes seeing the payment to procure relief, believed that extortion was the sole origin as well as object of the performance. But the learned in Burmese folk-lore assign it a much higher and more estimable beginning. When, after the world was formed, it was first peopled from the superior heavens of the Byammahs, of the nine that remained behind, weighed down by the gross earthly food they had eaten, five gradually became men and four women. When these Byammah-gyee koh-youk, these nine great ancestors of the Burmese and of all mankind, had gradually degenerated, through the substitution of Pahdahlahtah for the original flavoured earth, and of Thalay rice for the leguminous creeper, desire arose among them, and four of the men took the four women to wife. The fifth man naturally resented being left compulsorily single, and pelted the happy couples with stones on their marriage night. Sympathy with the feelings of this archetypal bachelor has perpetuated the stone-throwing by the loo-byos down to the present day, and if there is no dearth of eligible spinsters in our times, the lonely bachelor

may be allowed to express his envy of his friend's bliss without being accused of anything but gross cupidity.

After marriage the couple almost always live for two or three years in the house of the bride's parents, the son-in-law becoming one of the family and contributing to its support. Setting up a separate establishment, even in Rangoon, where the young husband is a clerk in an English office, is looked upon with disfavour as a piece of pride and ostentation. If the girl is an only daughter, she and her husband stay on till the old people die.

Polygamy is recognised and permitted, but practically does not exist now in British territory. A man with more than one wife becomes a subject of public talk, and a native official now living is well known all through the three provinces as the myo-oke with twenty wives. In native territory the right to have several wives was equally little used in practice. Many of the high officials who travelled about over large districts had wives in almost all the towns they visited—a custom in great measure induced by the rule which provided that the mayah-gyee, the chief wife, must be left in Mandalay as a hostage for the fidelity of the official. But the great bulk of the people are, and always have been, monogamous. King Mindohn had fifty-three recognised *wives*, of whom thirty-seven survived him. His children numbered one hundred and ten, of whom upwards of fifty survived him. Besides the wives, like Solomon, he had numerous concubines.

The forbidden degrees are few. Marriages with mother, daughter, sister, and half-sister, aunt, grandmother, and granddaughter, are forbidden, but none else. A son may marry his stepmother; it is expressly mentioned in the Dammathat. The sovereign always marries at least one half-sister to ensure the purity of the royal blood, but, rather illogically, the issue of this union is not by any means necessarily heir to the throne. The son whom the king, or his ministers after his death, name, succeeds, or more commonly still, the son who can best maintain his position by force.

The liberty of divorce is practically unrestricted, except by the elaborate laws respecting the division of property.

According to the Laws of Menu a woman may obtain a divorce among other reasons for the following: When her husband is poor and unable to support her; when he is always ailing; when he does not work and leads an idle life; when he is incapacitated by reason of old age; when he becomes a cripple after marriage.

And a man may obtain a divorce if his wife has no male children, if she has no love for her husband, or if she persists in going to a house where he tells her she must not visit, and so on.

The lawgiver seems in fact to have laid down that marriage is a civil contract which either party can dissolve; but, unless with good reason, the one that wishes to separate must suffer in property, more or less severely, according as the plea is good or bad.

Property, for this purpose, is said to be of three kinds. Pah-yin, property acquired by, or in possession of, persons before marriage. Let-htet-pwah, property acquired by husband or wife after marriage. Tin-thee, property inherited or obtained by gift. Pah-yin after marriage becomes hnit-pah-zohn, that is, the joint property of husband and wife, but only when it is agreed between them either before or after marriage that the property shall be put together for the mutual benefit.

In the event of a divorce both parties take away whatever pah-yin they may have had on marriage, and the let-htet-pwah is divided either by mutual agreement, or by the decision of the village elders who sanction the separation.

But divorces are far from being so common as most writers would have us believe. The warmth of family affection is one of the strongest traits of the race, and the Burman is always very kind to his wife, while every girl is taught from her earliest years to look with the highest respect upon man as man, and to defer in all things to his judgment, though she is far more free than the Indian wife. The Burman consults with his partner in all his affairs, public and private, and often is entirely guided by her. She keeps the shop that is to be found in almost every house in the country towns, and usually makes far more money than the goodman himself. It is a simple matter to blame the

Burmese for easy marriage customs, but the system speedily puts an end to unhappy and ill-assorted unions, and illegitimate children are exceedingly rare. Finally, unless there is good known cause for a separation the divorced parties are not by any means looked upon with a favourable eye. The man who enters a monastery to get rid of a wife goes by the contemptuous name of taw-twet "jungle runaway," for the rest of his life, while the ta-koo-lat, the *divorcée*, is a perennial subject of joke to the jester in the play :—

> She that's neither maid, married, nor widow,
> Fits all men as a pot does it's lid, O.

That is to say, a divorced woman needs small wooing. Such a woman will not hesitate to cut off the byah-bazan, the lappets of hair that fall down over the ears, the last resource of the despairing and unwilling celibate.

The literature of marriage is not inconsiderable. The tattooing ceremonies, a-noo say, love-philtres, charms, and what not, are referred to elsewhere. There remain a number of singular matters to be taken note of by those who would be happy in married life. Thus the girls are told how they may ascertain a man's character by the colour of his heart's blood—though how they are to ascertain this colour without injury to the subject of inquiry is not mentioned. A lustful man's blood is dark red ; a cross, quarrelsome man's is so dark as almost to be black ; a lazy man's like elephant's water ; a rough-speaking man's like boiled pease : a charitable man's like the flower of the mahah hlayga, a species of bauhinia ; while a learned man's heart's blood is beautiful as the ruby.

Similarly useless knowledge is the statement that an ignorant man's heart is all in one mass, while that of the well-instructed divides itself into three small parts.

As models of married women are held up the Taw lay-wa, the most faithful and beautiful of wives, the consorts of four of the chief princes in the ten great Jatakas, treating of the last births of the Lord Buddha. To say that a girl is Taw lay-wa win louk, calculated to become like one of these four great queens, Amayah the wife of Mahawthata, the Solomon of Buddhist kings ; Madee, the wife of Waythan-

daya, world-famed for his charity; Kehnnayee or Thanboola, the partners of princes hardly less celebrated, is to pay the highest possible compliment to any woman. But these are somewhat vague and intangible matters. There are other recommendations which appeal much more directly to those intending to get married; to the man that seeks a wife, san-shway, pure as "test gold"; or the girl who would avoid a linkway, a "cur of a husband."

Prominent among these is the rhyme of "the hostile pairs," the yan-hpet, who, if they marry, will certainly have a short life.

Some violence is done to the niceties of language in the linga, so that I may be allowed the same in the translation of a portion of it.

Friday's daughter
Didn't oughter
Marry with a Monday's son;
Should she do it
Both will rue it,
Life's last lap will soon be run.

The same lamentable result would follow if the man were born on Friday and the woman on Monday. Again:

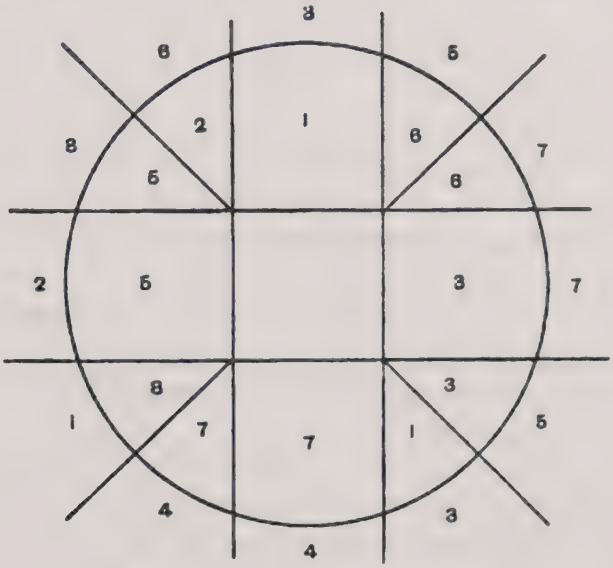
Saturdays and Thursdays,
The serpent and the rat,
You cannot find out worse days,
Life's short enough at that.

The serpent and the rat preside over Saturday and Thursday respectively. Similar curtailment of life would follow if the union was between Sunday and Wednesday, or between Tuesday and the eighth half-day Yahu. One or both contracting parties would soon die if children of these hostile days married.

On the other hand, there is an elaborate figure showing what unions according to birthdays will be lucky.

The numbers represent the days of the week according to the order. 1, Sunday; 2, Monday; 3, Tuesday; 4, Wednesday; 5, Thursday; 6, Friday; 7, Saturday; 8, Yahu (half Wednesday). The inner numbers represent the man's birthday; the outer the woman's. Those who choose their

wives in accordance with this figure will be happy and well-to-do.




The outer ring the maiden's,
The inner ring the man's.
All ye who would be wealthy
On this scheme form your plans.

All these rhymes are learned by the little boys at school, sometimes formally taught them by the preceptor as an excerpt from the Baydin, sometimes, when the yahan refuses to recognise the validity of these books, studied surreptitiously along with the secular plays and song-books. Whatever else a girl may know, you may be sure she can give you the marriage rhymes.

After the marriage has been settled upon, lucky combination of birthdays, parents' consent, settlement of dower and so on, all satisfactorily arranged, the difficulties are not yet over. A lucky day has to be sought from the horoscopes of the two chief parties, but beyond this there are a number of obstacles which must on no account be overlooked. In the first place, with the pious the same rule prevails as in England, that no marriages should take place in Lent. This cuts upwards of three months out of the year immediately. Unfortunately a number of persons are so completely in the world of kahma, the seat of the passions, that they

care very little whether it is the season of the Wah or not. But almost every one, whether pious or not, considers well the character of the months as given in the marriage linga. The year begins with Tagoo, commencing about the middle of April. In this month and Kasohn the next, couples marrying will be very rich. In Nayohn they will love one another. Those marrying in Wahsoh and Wahgoung, when Lent begins, will die or be grievously sick. If the young pair are so mad as to brave the danger, their parents should stop the marriage. In Tawthalin, Na'daw, and Pyatho, if you marry, you will lose goods and money. In Thadingyoot you will have slaves, children, and money as much as you want. In Tasoungmohn slaves, buffaloes, cattle and furniture in abundance, will flow in upon the married couple. Tabohdwè and Taboung are very unlucky for those who tempt Hymen. There will be no children, or only girls, and misfortunes will be frequent. Nevertheless though there is all this trouble in getting a wife to your mind, as well as lucky in time of birth, worldly goods, and season of marriage, there are very few Burmans, not in the sacred order, who are not married before they are twenty, and happily married too. As the popular saying puts it—

Yay hnin ngah
Lin hnin mayah.

Fish to the water,
Man to Eve's daughter.

## CHAPTER VIII

### DOMESTIC LIFE

THE Burman is the most calm and contented of mortals. He does not want to grow rich. When he does make a large sum of money, he spends it all on some pious work, and rejoices in the thought that this will meet with its reward in his next existence. If he never amasses enough to build any great public work, at any rate he subscribes what he can, and is generous in almsgiving. A bountiful soil will not let its children starve; and so the Burman jogs on through a cheerful existence, troubled by no anxious cares, and free from all the temptations of ambition. His daily round is simple enough. In the morning, after his bath, he loiters about, talking to the neighbours till breakfast time, or perhaps strolls out to the corner of his paddy field, and indulges in a contemplative smoke. After breakfast he probably dozes through the heat of the day, and when the shadows begin to get long, saunters about again. A semblance of regular labour appears when the paddy is being sown or the grain reaped, but even then no one is in the least inclined to disturb himself for the sake of rapid work. It is sufficient that you are always certain in Burma what kind of weather you are going to have. "Another hot day," or "another wet day," is quite as much a matter of course as the rising of the sun itself, and there is therefore no need to hurry operations in case of a change. The evenings are spent ordinarily at a pwè during the fine season, or in amicable converse over a cheroot at a friend's house in the rains. Variety comes occasionally in the shape of a jolting, hilarious journey to a distant pagoda feast, or a trip down the river in

the big rice-boat to one of the great milling towns. And so an uneventful life passes away: the greatest ambition to see the village boat successful at the Thadingyoot races, and the village champion cock or buffalo triumphant over all others; the greatest desire to live peaceably with all men and observe the Ten Precepts; the greatest excitement the occasional visit of the English district officer, or the suspicion of a witch in that lonely house down by the nat's pool on the creek. In Upper Burma formerly this quiet was more apt to be disturbed by the summoning of levies to serve in some special raid against audacious dacoits, or to make a demonstration against reiving mountaineers. If the myo-woon was a pious man, calls for enforced labour at digging tanks, building pagodas and monasteries, rest-houses and tazoungs, were likely to keep the villager a great deal more occupied than he cared for. There can be no doubt in any patriotic Burman's mind that the state of the people, heavily taxed though they be, in British Burma, is infinitely happier than it was under their king, and all but the ignorant and fanatic lower classes longed for the day when the English flag was to float over all the land as far as Mohgoung. There could be no hope for the country, where even under a kindly king like Mindohn, ill-conditioned governors oppressed the populace with absolute impunity. Complaints were made, but his majesty could not venture to leave his palace for any great distance to inquire for himself, and gold easily dulled the senses of the highest minister round the golden throne. It is little wonder then that the people, kept perpetually in the lowest depths of poverty, were, if not actually dying out, certainly not increasing in numbers. There was nothing which so much indicated the popular feeling, and at the same time so irritated the Burmese Government, as the unceasing stream of emigrants to Lower Burma.

Nevertheless, even in Independent territory the Burman preserved his light heart and buoyant disposition. No calamity is so overwhelming as to make him despond. Some years ago a large fire occurred in Mandalay, and spread with such terrible rapidity that the inhabitants of a whole quarter were unable to save anything but the clothes they wore. Some of them went the next day to the English chaplain in Mandalay, and told him of the misfortune that

had befallen them, and how so completely were they rendered destitute that they had been indebted to the charity of the inhabitants of the monastery for a breakfast that morning. The clergyman promised to do what he could for them, and the same evening went along to view the site of the fire. What was his astonishment to find that the burnt-out victims had rigged up a rude stage among the charred stumps of their house-posts, and in default of a house to sleep in, were prepared to spend the night listening to the love-making of the princes and princesses, and laughing at the caustic witticisms of the clown, not a few of the jokes being inspired by the blackened surroundings. Such defiance of all the ills of fate is very characteristic, and would seem to a Burman mind the most natural thing to do under the circumstances as affording both distraction and amusement.

If any one has escaped the curse of Adam it is the Burman. He does not need to earn his bread with the sweat of his brow, and riches having no attraction for him, when his patch of paddy land has been reaped, his only concern is how to pass the time, and that is no very difficult matter, where he has plenty of cheroots and betel-nut. He can stroll along to neighbour Moung Gyee's, whose son has a knack for wood-carving, and watch him as he deftly cuts out a piece of elaborate scroll-work for the roof of a neighbouring monastery, or finishes off the grim features of a beeloo for the English Inspector of Police. Next door the sayah is engaged on a painting, the representation of some palace scene, or of some well-known event in the life of the Lord Buddha. Burmese artists do not go in much for taking likenesses, though they are by no means unsuccessful when they make the attempt. As a rule, however, any one but a high official would consider it a mark of great presumption and conceit to hang up a picture of himself in his house. There is, however, none of the objection to portrait painting which is so common with some other nations. For example, the Mohammedans will not suffer likenesses to be drawn for fear they should demand a soul on the Day of Judgment, and so some actual human being might come to be left out in the cold. Catlin tells us that the American Indian chief was in a state of great alarm lest his soul might be carried

off with his picture. A notion of the same kind appears in the Chinese custom of getting a priest to put in the pupil of the eye, a method which often has rather a ghastly effect when the reverend gentleman is not skilful. Similarly, every Chinese-owned craft, from the sampan to the English-built iron screw steamer, has a couple of eyes painted on its bows, in order that it may see the way. Down in the Straits, and in all places where there are many Chinese, the local steamers, whoever their owners may be, are all endowed with eyes. Were they not so favoured, no Chinaman would travel with them as a passenger, or send any of his goods aboard of them. The Burman is not troubled with any such fantastic notions, and has no objection whatever to sitting for his portrait, only, as the late king said to Colonel Yule, they prefer a flattering likeness to an exact one. It is seldom, however, that a Burman has a picture gallery in his house, and the village artist usually confines himself to vivid-coloured sketches for the funeral of a pohn-gyee, or to be hung round the mandut, where the great people sit to look on at a play. The drawing and the perspective are naturally a little faulty, but the details are usually worked out with very creditable skill.

Thus wandering about, seeing what his neighbours are doing, with an occasional visit to the monastery to have some edifying talk with the religious, our villager may spend the time very comfortably. Oftenest, however, he stays at home, and waits for visitors to drop in and have a little gossip. The goodwife always has a little shop in the lower part of the building. There is hardly a single house in the whole village where something is not offered for sale: a few dried fish, betel-nut, with the fresh green leaves, lime, cardamoms, and cutch, all ready for making up, half a dozen cocoa-nuts, or perhaps some twopenny-ha'penny knives, looking-glasses, coloured tumblers, and paltry Manchester goods, or where there are many girls about the house, a few home-made lohn-gyees and pasohs, woven at odd times in the loom which stands in the yard or in a corner of the verandah of every house. The stock-in-trade is intended more as an excuse for people to enter the house and have a talk than with any idea of making a profit. Whatever

money is drawn is regarded as a kind of pin-money for the mistress of the establishment. When the ladies of the household are in earnest about trading, they start a stall in the bazaar, and very good hands they are at driving a bargain. A more regrettable trait is the forcible character of their language when they are annoyed. But this, I believe, is a characteristic of the fair sex all the world over, whether in trade or out of it. Certain it is that the *dames de la halle* and the Billingsgate fishwives would require all their powers of voice and vituperation to silence a bazaar maiden when she sets her mind to it.

There are as a general thing two meals only in the day: breakfast at about eight in the morning, and dinner at five in the afternoon. There is no difference in the *menu* of the two meals. The staple article of food is plain boiled rice, which is piled up in a heap on a huge platter, round about which the household arrange themselves, sitting, like pit-men, on their heels. The curry which is taken with it is placed in little bowls, and each one of the party has his own plate, and helps himself. Knives are unnecessary; spoons and forks and celestial chopsticks are unknown, except in the houses of a few Government officials in Rangoon, who have had some experience of English society. Very few are able to afford curries of meat or fish, besides that there are not always unscrupulous people ready to disregard the law against taking life, and the material is therefore not always available. Ordinarily the curry consists of a soup, or thin concoction of vegetables, in which chillies and onions figure largely. The other ingredients are very various. Young shoots of bamboo are very delicate in their flavour, if not overpowered by too much garlic. Wild asparagus, the succulent stems of a number of aquatic plants and fleshy arums are constantly used, and may be seen exposed for sale in every bazaar. Tamarind leaves and those of the mango-tree are used by the very poor. The former have a somewhat acrid taste, the latter are curiously aromatic. Along with the curry, which has always a large modicum of oil and salt in it, there are a variety of condiments, notably the strongly-flavoured nga-pee, without which no Burman would consider his meal complete. Sometimes the big, fierce-stinging kah-

gyin, a species of red ant, is used along with this fish paste, sometimes it is fried in oil by itself. As may be imagined, they have an acid and decidedly pungent flavour about them. Roasted turtle's and iguana's eggs, dried fish, and fried ginger are gourmand's adjuncts.[1] Nothing is ever drunk at meals, but each one, when he has finished, goes to the earthenware jar full of water which stands in a corner of the verandah, and rinses out his mouth. It is a lamentable fact that many Burmans in the low country now drink beer and spirits, but this is never done at meals nor in the house, where indeed the wife would not allow it. The tippling Burman goes to the "toddy-shop" for his liquor, and the worst of it is that he does not know when to stop. Brandy of the fiery description known to the British soldier as "fixed bayonets," or "chain-shot," is often drunk, but the usual tipple is "Old Tom." A particularly heady mixture of this with cheap beer is affected by confirmed topers.

After meals every one smokes—men, women, and children. Facetious people have declared that Burman babies blow a cloud while they are still at the breast. This is a scandal. They never indulge till they are able to walk without needing the assistance of their hands. The ordinary Burman cheroot is very mild and has really very little tobacco in it. The full-flavoured article to be seen occasionally in London shops is manufactured almost entirely for English residents. The say paw-lehp, the cigar for home consumption, commonly known as the green cheroot, is very large, from six to eight inches long and about an inch in diameter at one end, tapering to half that breadth at the other. It rounds a girl's mouth a good deal when she puts it in. In the manufacture of it chopped tobacco leaves and pieces of the stem of the tobacco plant and the pith of the oh'nè, a species of Euphorbia, are the chief ingredients. Very often these are boiled with palm-sugar and allowed to dry before making up. The cover is made of the leaf of the teak-tree, or of a plant called the thanat, the ends being

[1] There is a particular objection to the smell of cookery, and when anything is fried in oil, or prepared so as to produce a strong savour, it is always done to leeward of the house, and where the fumes may not reach any other dwelling. Such smells are believed to be very productive of fever.

tucked in at the point. A piece of red raw silk fastens it at the end put in the mouth, and some broader pieces of pith are put there to give it stiffness to the lips. The finer kinds, such as were only used in Upper Burma in the palace, are rolled up in the thin white inner coating of the bark of the betel-tree. The cheroot has an ash like a cinder, and usually burns holes in the clothes of an Englishman the first time he tries it. Laid down thoughtlessly on an oily mat, it is a fruitful cause of fires. All Burman ladies are adepts at rolling cheroots, and a dozen or two of them form a common present to favoured swains.

Chewing betel is sometimes carried on simultaneously with smoking, but most people prefer to economise enjoyment, and only chew in the interval between smokes. Chewing is hardly an exact expression, and the use of it frequently leads the experimenting Briton into the unpleasant predicament of having all the interstices between his teeth choked up with little fragments of the nut which with their indescribable aromatic flavour stimulate the flow of saliva for hours afterwards. The Burman splits his nut in half, smears a little slaked lime, usually white, but sometimes tinted pink or salmon coloured, on the betel vine leaf, puts in a little morsel of cutch and tobacco, and then rolls it up and stows away the quid in the side of his mouth, occasionally *squeezing* it a little between his teeth. It is as well to be very cautious with the lime and cutch (the juice of the *Acacia catechu*) the first time you make a trial. The latter especially is very astringent.[1] Chewing kohng-thee is an unlovely practice. The Burman has none of the delicacy with regard to a spittoon which characterises the American, and these articles require to be of a very considerable size. The monks are perhaps the most persistent chewers of the good betel. Smoking is prohibited, but nothing is said against betel, and it is considered a great stimulator of the meditative faculties. The lime used very speedily corrodes and destroys the teeth, and then the old pohn-gyee has to make the scholars crush up the nuts so that they may not hurt his toothless gums. It is a common belief that no one

[1] One variety of the nut, called the toung-ngoo betel, has effects very much resembling intoxication.

can speak Burmese well till he chews betel. Demosthenes is said to have put pebbles in his mouth when he was practising oratory.

Alternate smoking, chewing, and conversation serve to pass the day, and after dinner, when the sun goes down, our villager has a bath down by the well to freshen him up. The water is drawn up in a bucket and simply poured over the body. Soap is never used, and particular care is taken not to wet the hair. The head washing is a special ceremony, to be gone through only occasionally, and then with circumspection. Dandies, as a rule, put a solution of rice and water on their hair every day to make it grow long, and cocoanut water is also very generally used. Both sexes are proud of the length of their hair, and it is not uncommon to see it reaching below the knee and down to the ankles. The men wear it in a young or knot on the top of the head, while the sadohn of the women is on the back. Both men and women are in the habit of adding to its size by interweaving false tresses, which are easily got, seeing that everybody has black hair, and that some young member of the family is constantly getting his locks cut off on his entry into the monastery. There is no more sense of shame in using false hair than there is in improving the appearance by wearing fine clothes. At his bath it is usual for a pious person to repeat a Pali charm over the first bucket of water, which is then slowly poured over the body. The object of this is to guard against sickness.

After bathing, our friend usually puts on his fine clothes, for if it is not the rainy season there is sure to be a dramatic performance, or a yehn dance by the village lads and lasses, or an entertainment of some kind going on at some house in the village. The dress is very simple and picturesque. The pasoh is a long silk cloth, fifteen cubits long and about two and a half wide. It is wound round the body, kilt fashion, tucked in with a twist in front, and the portion which remains gathered up and allowed to hang in folds from the waist, or thrown jauntily over the shoulder. The body is covered with a short white cotton jacket, over which a dark or coloured cloth one is often worn. Elderly people, and the wealthy of all ages, when they are paying a visit of

ceremony or going to worship at the pagoda, wear a teing-mathehn, a long white coat, open in front except at the throat, where it is tied, and reaching almost to the knees. Round the head a flowered silk handkerchief is loosely wound as a turban. The old wear a simple narrow fillet of white book-muslin round the temples and showing the hair. This is called a pawlohn.

The woman's tamehn is a simple piece of cotton or silk, almost square, four feet and a half long by about five broad, and woven in two pieces of different patterns. This is wound tightly over the bosom, and fastened with a simple twist of the ends. The opening being in front, the symmetry of the thigh is displayed in walking, but a peculiar outward jerk of the heels which the girls acquire prevents any suggestion of immodesty. The loose cotton jacket is unhappily not so well contrived to display their charms. Over the shoulders is thrown a bright silk handkerchief, the same as that used by the men for turbans. Nothing is worn on the head except flowers twisted into the hair. Dressed in their best, the family sally forth in search of amusement. If it is a pwè, they will not get home till very late, possibly not till daybreak, when the yellow line of monks issuing forth on their matutinal tour may meet them at the monastery gate. A country dance naturally does not last nearly so long, though it is kept up much longer than most people would care to dance a hornpipe, or even a minuet. But a still more favourite form of amusement is the entertainment of a sah-haw sayah, a kind of reciter or improvisatore. He is paid to come to a house, and the company invited are asked to choose a subject for him, some of the favourite zahts, or an incident in history, sacred or secular. Many of them, like the cyclic poets, repeat from memory, but there are others who invent their smooth verses as they go on chanting. They may perform in a house, or in a mandut specially run up for the occasion, or even in the open street. When a well-known sah-haw sayah is going to recite the Waythandaya or the Zanekka Zahts, or when he tells how the Lord Buddha left his father's palace to wear the yellow robe, or how he ascended to Tawadehntha, a dramatic performance is often completely deserted, and the actors have

no option but to follow the populace and listen to the improvisatore themselves. One of the best of the Burmese dramatic writers, Oo Poh Myah, was also particularly celebrated as a sah-haw sayah. He could repeat his own drama, the Weezaya Zaht, from end to end, but had also a particular facility in improvising.

His night's amusement over, the Burman goes home to sound sleep on his Donoobyoo mat, and rises to spend another day of the same kind. He cares nothing for the assertion that he leads an aimless, lazy life. He has enough to live upon, and the writings of all the philosophers say that wealth only brings new cares.

# CHAPTER IX

## THE HOUSE AND ITS BELONGINGS

It is singular that in a country where the pagodas and temples will compare in stately grandeur and symmetry of form with the sacred edifices of any part of the world, and where the monastic buildings, though only constructed of wood, strike the most casual observer with their shapely beauty and wealth of decoration ; it is singular where there is a taste for such edifices and abundance of the architectural skill necessary to erect them, that the Burman should in the vast majority of cases live in the flimsiest of bamboo huts. The original cause may be found perhaps in the stringent regulations of the Yahzageing. In Upper Burma the shape of a man's house was fixed for him by law according to his station in life. All were one-storied, save where exceptional royal favour had granted the spire-like roof to a distinguished noble. Brick houses were forbidden, from the apprehension that the inhabitants might take it into their heads to turn them into fortifications. Gilding was forbidden to all subjects, and permission to lacquer and paint the pillars of their houses granted to but a very few, and it was expressly laid down that no one should have an arch over his door. This may account for the paltry and even wretched appearance of the houses in Theebaw Min's territory, but it is undeniable that though in British Burma they are very considerably more substantial, yet a rich man never by any chance thinks of building himself a grand house, and remains firmly by the unpretentious model of his ancestors. This is the more curious, because they will spare no expense to buy gay turbans and bright-coloured pasohs for themselves, and costly

silks for their wives. The ordinary explanation is that every one can see what clothes you wear, while few people care to come and spy out what kind of a house you live in, and how you fare. But there can be very little doubt that the real reason is a survival of the idea of the old Yahzageing, as well as the fact that long years of custom have impressed upon everybody the opinion that there are only two forms of architecture, the secular and the ecclesiastical, and no one, no matter how sure he might be that the Government would take no notice of his ambition, would brave the denunciations of the religious by adding a spire to his house, or even adorning the gable ends with the carved pinnacles and flamboyant finials of the monasteries. Consequently the one regular form prevails everywhere.

The Burman's dwelling, then, is always shaped more or less like a marquee tent, and never more than one story high, to avoid the humiliating possibility of the feet of some one being over your head. But the whole house stands on posts, so that the floor is seven or eight feet from the ground. It consists often of only one room, usually, however, of two or more, and to the front of the house there is always a verandah, three or four feet lower than the general level of the house, and as often as not quite open to the street, or the garden, or whatever may be in front. The posts which form the main or central part of the house are usually six in number, and all have their names, such as Oo-yoo, Kyah-hngan, Nyoung-yan. The south post, in the main part of the house, the Thabyay-teing, is the best known, as being always adorned with leaves and particularly marked as that in the top of which most probably lives the nat-spirit of the house. A dead body, after being swathed, and while waiting for the coffin, is always placed by it.

A house ought never to be built till the foundations have been thoroughly dug up and shown to a soothsayer. He will determine from the substances found whether it is a lucky place to build a house in or not. It stands to reason that the building cannot be commenced till a lucky day and hour have been sought out. There is considerable care to be observed in the selection of the timber. Posts are masculine, feminine, and neuter. Male posts are of equal size at both

ends; females are larger at the base; those which swell out in the middle are a-thet ma-shee—without life; teing beeloo, ogre's posts, are largest at the top. As a general rule it may be taken for granted that if a house is built with neuter posts, its inmates will always be miserable and unlucky; if the posts are ogres, death and disaster will attend; male posts are easy-going and harmless; females, on the contrary, are fortunate and leading to honour. But it may happen that the character of the piece of ground on which the house is built upsets all these generalisations, so that it is necessary to get a wise man's opinion before you get your posts. The Dehttohn gives many instructions on the subject, and among other things mentions how a man's fortune may be calculated from the Hlay-ga-tit, the side pieces of the steps which lead up to the verandah. The presence or absence of knots, and if the former, their position, determines the luck of the householder.

Poor people use bamboo instead of wood, and make their walls of mats, woven of the same substance, split up. Occasionally, however, they rise to the dignity of common jungle timber. Richer people make use of the invaluable teak, or of pyinka-doh (*Xylia dolabriformis*), a wood almost as durable, and equally expensive. White ants will attack neither of these. The walls of such houses are planked. The roof is sometimes composed of small flat tiles, but more commonly of thatch. This consists in most places of danee, the leaves of the toddy-palm, which are first soaked in salt water, a precaution which prevents insects from destroying them. This style of roofing is very satisfactory in every respect but one. It is cheap, easily put on, thoroughly water-tight, but very inflammable, and consequently is not allowed in any of the larger towns of British Burma. In the smaller stations, however, it is almost universal, and the consequence is that when one house takes fire, the sparks from it kindle all the others, as a matter of course. Consequently, as an imperative measure of protection, every house is provided with a long hooked bamboo, called a mee-cheht, by means of which to pull off all the thatch as soon as a fire breaks out in the neighbourhood, and in addition to this a mee-kat stands beside it. This is a broad griddle, or flapper kind of thing,

and its object is to beat out the flame which may be caused by a spark lighting on the roof. In addition to this, in many parts of the country, pots full of water are always kept in readiness on the tops of the houses, so that when the hour of danger comes, the householder may douse his roof, and so do the best for himself. In Mandalay some of the pah-gwets, and other outcasts, patrol the streets all night, to watch for and prevent fires as much as possible.

Another kind of roofing is wah-kat, a sort of flat tile-like construction, six feet long by two feet broad, made of coarse bamboo matting. Bamboos split in half down the centre, and with the knots smoothed away, are also used. They are placed close together, with the hollow side upwards, extending all the way down from the ridge to the eaves, and over these again are placed others with the rounded side up, the whole presenting rather a curious appearance, but making a very serviceable roof and not nearly so dangerous as the danee. The leaves of other trees are also occasionally used, but the simplicity and cheapness of the danee roof make it by far the most prevalent, notwithstanding its danger. In Rangoon and Maulmein, shingles, that is, small wooden slabs like slates, are being very generally introduced.

In the better class of houses the floors are made of planking, but poorer people have nothing better than a series of whole or split bamboos laid side by side on the cross-beams and tied down with rattans. This is not very pleasant to walk on, and has the further disadvantage of being anything but cleanly, for the spaces between the bamboos offer an irresistible temptation to drop all litter and garbage on to the ground immediately underneath the house, and were it not for the pariah dogs the sanitary condition of the place would soon be very bad.

The house is thus simple enough in its character, but the furniture is still more so. Intercourse with the English has indeed brought many Burmans to indulge in English luxuries, and in many houses in Rangoon, chandeliers, bookcases, pictures, and even statuary are to be seen, besides abundance of chairs and tables, and occasionally bedsteads, while clocks, kerosine lamps, looking-glasses, and lounge chairs are universal. But it is very different in the district

houses. There is practically no furniture at all there, for a chair is no use to a Burman, and without chairs tables are equally useless. Consequently all that is to be seen in a jungle house is the goodman's box, and a few woven mats and hard bamboo pillows to sleep on. Cots are not used, for one of the Ten Precepts, to be kept on duty-days, is that one must not sleep on a high place. The only furnishings visible are the mats rolled up during the day with the rugs or blankets which serve for bedding. The mats themselves are probably home-made, manufactured from fine strips of bamboo, the best being those with the polished silicious outside, which stand any amount of work. Softer, finer articles are made from the skin of the theng, a species of rush, which takes a black dye, and is often worked into patterns, but no one has anything more elaborate, and indeed nothing better could be wished for. A cooler bed could not easily be found. In the country, also, the cooking place during the rains is in the house. During the fine weather culinary operations are carried on in the open air, behind the premises. The cooking range is nothing more than a box, two or three feet square, and six inches deep, filled up with earth or ashes, and on the top of this the wood used as fuel is piled. The cooking utensils and the dining service are equally simple. The former consists of nothing further than two or three earthen pots with lids to them, and a wooden spurtle to stir the contents with. Close at hand is a jar full of water, with a ladle—half a cocoa-nut with a handle through it. These are all the kitchen appliances. In place of table there is a huge round dish of lacquered wood, called a byat. These byats are sometimes as much as three feet and more in diameter, and on them is heaped up in a gigantic pile the rice, while the curry is served in little bowls disposed round about. A young couple have, therefore, no ruinous expenses when they set up house. The inventory of effects necessarily is soon made.

Outside the house there is not much more to notice. The abundance of land allows every one to have a court-yard of his own. In this the farmer keeps his cart and plough, the fisherman his boat. The buffaloes and oxen of the whole village are usually all together on a pasture-ground

kept by some speculative individual, who charges a couple of rupees or so for feeding and looking after them. The care exercised is not very great. Heat and rain kill many of them, where, as is too frequently the case, no shelter is available; foot-and-mouth disease, and other epidemics, carry off great numbers, and finally, they are not at all averse to killing one another. Consequently the vultures are always to be seen on the trees round the village pasture-land. Besides his implements the house-owner has always in his yard a hand rice-mill. Husking paddy has become, near the big towns, quite a separate trade, and abundance of cleaned rice may be bought in the bazaars, but in the village every family husks its own rice, the grain being kept stored in a small granary in the yard. The milling is done by the women, and there are two processes in the operation. The mill consists of two wooden cylinders about two feet thick, the inner surfaces of both roughened in a simple way by the cutting of radii from their centres, the lines being about a quarter of an inch deep. The upper cylinder has a funnel-shaped hole cut through it, to let the grain down, and is worked backwards and forwards by a long pole loosely fastened in, the rice coming out between the two cylinders, and falling on mats down below. It is winnowed either in the primitive way of throwing it into the air, so that the light husk may be blown away, or, often nowadays in Lower Burma, by a hand-worked pair of fanners, introduced since the English occupation.

The rice is not yet, however, ready for cooking. The inner pellicle has still to be removed, and this is done in a big wooden mortar. Two varieties are in use, worked either by hand, as an apothecary pounds his drugs, the pestle being very long and heavy; or by foot, when the wooden mortar is sunk in the ground. The pestle in this latter case consists of a short, stumpy piece of wood, let into a long lever near the end. This lever is supported on two uprights at some distance from the mortar, and the machine is worked by a person stepping on and off the bar, so as to raise the pestle and let it fall on the rice in the mortar. The rice is very thoroughly cleaned in this way, and Burmans prefer it to that which has passed between the mill-stones of the

European factory. The Derbyshire, or composition stones, do their work only too thoroughly, and remove so much of the pellicle as to take away all the flavour, besides that the great heat caused by the steady grinding tends to the same result. Consequently the pleasant refrain of the girls chanting at their work may be heard all over the village after dark, and when a large quantity has to be prepared for some offering to the Sacred Order on a feast-day, the chanted chorus rises and falls round about the homestead often till long past "midnight cock-crow," till the rising of the "red star" warns them to retire to rest, tired, but happy, for such a good work earns great merit. A sesamum oil-press is also frequently found in at least one house in every village. This is equally simple in its construction. It consists of a deep wooden trough, in which the seeds are pressed by a heavy upright timber fixed in a frame. The weight is increased by a long lever, on the end of which a man sits and guides a bullock which goes round in a circle, thus crushing and turning the seed at the same time.

The carts are very strongly built, and are remarkable for the way in which the floor curves upwards towards the back in the same way as the boats do. In Upper Burma formerly the wheels were mostly composed of one solid, roughly-rounded slab of wood, or in some cases of two semi-circular slabs joined together, and these are still found in out-of-the-way places in Lower Burma, though wheels constructed in European fashion with spokes are mostly in use. Occasionally to save trouble the carter starts with a square wheel, and trusts to time to round it for him. Padouk (*Pterocarpus indicus*) is the wood most valued for this purpose, but it is too expensive for most people. The wheels are never greased, and make hideous shrieking noises as they revolve. This serves to keep away tigers and cheetahs when a journey is being made. At night the carts are arranged in a laager with the high backs outwards, and all inside, including the six oxen to every waggon, are safe from wild animals. The waggoners get to glory in the horrid sound of their wheels, which often can be heard miles off in the forest. A wheel with a creak of particular volume and power of penetration is highly prized, and an experienced driver can tell whom he

is going to meet or overtake by the groanings of the axles and the key in which they are pitched. Every bullock in addition carries a square metal bell tied under his throat.

In the yard round about the house there is very often a little garden fenced off in a rough kind of way, but no particular care is taken to keep it neat and free from weeds—no easy matter even for an active gardener in Burma. The favourite plant is always the Bohdda Tharanat (*Canna Indica*, or Indian shot), so named from its seeds, which are used for the beads of the rosary. The flowers are red, or sometimes white. The fable relates that it sprang from the Buddha's blood. His impious and evil-minded brother-in-law and cousin Dewadat, enraged that he was not allowed to have a separate assembly of his own, went to the top of a hill and rolled down a huge stone, intending to destroy the most excellent payah. But the boulder burst into a thousand pieces, and only one little bit bruised Shin Gautama's toe, and drew a few drops of blood, whence sprang the sacred flower. The renowned physician Zaywaka healed the great teacher's wound in a single day, and almost immediately afterwards the earth opened and swallowed up the sacrilegious Dewadat. The plants and flowers usually stand demurely in a single row, or perhaps in three or four, like a patch of peas. The *Datura tatula* is almost always found, and among the other mingled vegetables and medicinal plants the *Celosia cristata*, in both its yellow and purple varieties, is a special favourite. But the Burman can scarcely vaunt his success as a flower gardener.

There are always a few domestic animals and pets about the premises. Every family has its dog, which trots about the establishment and makes a terrible to-do whenever a white man appears. The pariahs are magnificent watch-dogs with their uninflectional, agglutinative barking. They sleep most of the day, and at night gather together in bands and do their best to make up for the want of jackals in Burma. There is always a huge band of unattached dogs about the village, for Buddhism does not permit of the drowning of superfluous puppies, and these manage to lead a fairly well-fed life between stealing and devouring the offerings at the pagoda, and the superabundant charity received by

the monks in their morning begging rounds. It is a mystery how they managed formerly to exist in Mandalay and Upper Burma generally; there were such constantly increasing hordes of them. Nowadays the Assistant Commissioner periodically issues an edict, and poisoned meat and the policemen's truncheons thin out their numbers very thoroughly for a month or two. The house-dog often perishes with his Bohemian acquaintances, and there is much lamentation among the younger members of the household, but there is no difficulty in getting a successor, grown up or otherwise. The ordinary pariah has a greater turn for agility than pluck, and the young civilian's English bull-dog would probably kill more of them, when he is on a tour to the outlying villages with his master, than he actually does, if he was as smart on his legs as he is with his jaws. The pariah is almost as noisy and quarrelsome as a Madrasi, but any fights there are result as harmlessly as a French duel. Nevertheless some of the trained hunting dogs will fasten on to a tiger, or a cheetah, or the even more dangerous wild boar, with the greatest determination. So esteemed are they that the sporting owner usually receives an official message to keep his dogs in safety when the half-yearly poisoners are about. Still though buffalo fights and mains of cocks have been common in Burma time out of mind, the pariah has never been called upon to develop pugnacious instincts.

The harmless, necessary cat is not so abundant. There are, however, few villages without one or two of them. What becomes of the kittens is a mystery. Perhaps they go wild and take to the woods. Perhaps the pariah eats them when their mother is out foraging. At any rate the fact remains that they increase but very slowly. The Burman cat is more fortunate than his Malay congener in possessing a tail, but asserts relationship with that animal in the possession of a horny hook, with this difference, that the hard excrescence is at the end of a tail of fair dimensions instead of being humbly situated on the rump, as is the case with the Straits tabby.

There are always some tame villatic fowl about the house. If the householder does not aspire to the ownership of a teik-kyet, a regular game cock, bred for the purpose, he has at least a kyet-hpa, an ordinary cock of combative instincts,

and backs him against his neighbour's when occasion offers, through the absence of the constable, by chance, or by the influence of pecuniary profit acting on a sporting disposition. A cock that declines to fight under any circumstances is called a kyet nyoung-gan, and stands in great danger of dying suddenly and being converted into curry. Hens are regarded with indifference except in view of similar possibilities, for their eggs are of no use. A fowl may be killed by accident by a stick thrown at random, but the germ of life in an egg cannot die unless it is boiled or goes rotten. In the former case the boiler incurs mortal danger from breaking one of the Five Precepts; in the latter the egg is undesirable. In small villages almost every one keeps a tè-gyet, a decoy cock, for luring the wild jungle-fowl. The fore-doomed hunter kills the game, and the pious owner of the decoy bird gets a good dinner. Similarly tè-gyoh, pigeons, are bred specially as lures, and so are partridges. Ordinary pigeons, occasionally used for the same purpose, go by the name of gyoh ta-nyin. Caged birds are not very common as pets, though every here and there one comes across a hill Mina, who has acquired a fair knowledge of the vernacular, and astonishes passers-by with the unceremonious way in which he hails them. But the Buddhist religion condemns keeping animals in confinement. So much is this the case that in Mandalay, and here and there in other places, there are men who make a regular living by catching birds and selling them to the pious, that they may gain merit by setting them free. Crafty birdcatchers are able so far to disable the bird, without doing it any material or visible harm, that they can catch it again immediately after their tender-hearted customer has gone his way. It used to be a common thing in the palace, during the late king's reign, to let loose a number of birds for the delectation of foreign worshippers at the golden feet, and the expansion of the royal merit. Ill-natured people said all the birds were recaptured in the next room, and appeared again for the next display of charity; but of that I can say nothing.

Each house, with its ground, is surrounded by a rude fence more or less substantial according to the character of the district. Where there are many tigers or dacoits, and

especially north of Mandalay, where formerly the Kachins might swoop down any night, this is made very high and strong, and is further rendered effective by a formidable array of sharpened bamboos. Except where the British have taken the matter in hand, the village roads are simply places where the jungle is kept from growing. There is no attempt at metalling; in fact there is no material for the purpose. In some pretentious villages indeed there is a raised path formed of bricks set on edge, and about three feet broad. This is regarded as a public work of great value, and a distinction to the inhabitants of the place. It usually leads to the monastery. In many villages, however, it would be impossible to move about during the rains without some such contrivance. The mud would be too deep, and logs are slippery even to bare feet.

Swinging by a couple of ropes from the roof hangs in the centre of the house a rude basket, made snug with a blanket or some old clothes. This is the baby's cradle, and the mother may often be seen sitting by it crooning and gently swaying it backwards and forwards. Some of the lullabies are very clever. I have tried to give a version of one of the most popular, with as near an approach to the metre as practicable. It is sung to the favourite tay-dat air.

SEHN-NEE LA-YOUNG

Clouds in Heaven,
Bright as levin,
Dyed with rosy diamond's light,
Did the Nine Gems
Stud your white hems,
Silver moonbeams
Cast their chill gleams,
But to make black darkness vanish,
Sweet sleep from my babe's eyes banish?
Fairies wiled him,
Dreams beguiled him,
In his cradle wrapped so snugly,
Cradle carved with nayas[1] ugly,

[1] A naya is a dragon with four legs. The word used here, myat è yin-wè, is specially reserved for royal cradles. The plebeian article is called pa-hket. Throughout, the language is of the most honorific character.

Carved with Nats and Kings and Princes,
Every splendour that evinces
Royal state and princely usance.
There he slept, when what a nuisance!
Comes the light
To affright
And scare him back to home from elfin land.

Sweet, my babe, your father's coming,
Rest and hear the songs I'm humming;
He will come and gently tend you,
Rock your cot and safe defend you;
Mother's setting out his dinner—
Oh, you naughty little sinner!
What a yell from such a wee thing,
Couldn't be worse if you were teething.
My sweet round mass of gold,
Now pray do what you're told.
Be quiet and good,
As nice boys should.
Oh, you plaguy, nasty brat!
I must call the great big cat,
He will come and squeeze and bite,
Scratch and eat you up outright.
Puss, puss, puss, you great big pussy!
Here's a boy so nice and juicy,
Let the mice have one night's pleasure,
You shall eat him at your leisure.

Nasty, naughty, noisy baby,
If the cat won't, Nats will maybe
Come and pinch and punch and rend you.
If they do I won't defend you.
Oh, now please,
Do not tease.
Do be good,
As babies should,
Just one tiny little while;
Try to sleep, or try to smile.
My prince, my sweet gold blood, my son,
Ordained a regal race to run,
Listen to your mother's coaxing,
Listen to the song good folks sing.
When little boys
Make such a noise,
Comes the brownie
On wings downy,
Comes the wood sprite
In the dark night,

Witch and warlock,
Mere and tor-folk,
Kelpie, nikker,
Quick and quicker,
Gobble all bad babies up.

Mercy, what an awful squall!
Don't you love mamma at all?
Where's your father? Fie, for shame!
He could quiet you if he came.
But he won't; he lolls and smokes,
With the neighbours cracks his jokes.
He's just as bad as you, tah-tay,[1]
Plagues poor mamma and stays away.
Now I tell you
This to quell you,
Both shall rue it.
Thus I'll do it,
Neither shall have any dinner;
You no sweet milk,
He no meat ilk,
You'll be good when you are thinner.

The King alone you dread on earth,
The wise man said it at your birth,
Said that all the stars would love you,
None on earth should be above you;
But I'm sure that in the palace
Princes never shriek for malice.
Now I'll sing the eighty ditties,[2]
Known in all the royal cities,
Lullabies so soft and drowsy
E'en the Nat-soh could not rouse ye.
Hush, my babe, my prince, my treasure,
List the poppy's slumbrous measure.

[1] Tah-tay, according to the consent of the Burmese nursery literature, is the typical bad boy.

[2] "The eighty ditties," a very old and well-known palace lullaby.

# CHAPTER X

## THE EARTH AND ITS BEGINNING

THE Lord Buddha cared very little for speculations, or theories as to the construction and extent of the terrestrial globe, or as to the size and motions of the sun, the moon, and the stars. Shin Gautama was entirely a moral philosopher, concerned with the workings of the mind, whose highest aim was to despise matter and free itself from such trammels in the progress towards Neh'ban. The consideration of natural phenomena was therefore entirely outside the province of the true sage. It is probable therefore that the transmogrified Hindu system which does duty for Burmese cosmography was elaborated rather by the Buddha's disciples than by himself. It has been altered only to suit Buddhistic religious views, with here and there the fancies of a lively imagination thrown in, but the outline of it existed before Prince Theidat came.

The Burmese are therefore certainly not responsible for it, but as some knowledge of the system is necessary for the comprehension of various superstitions, phrases, and forms of speech, it may be desirable to give a slight sketch of these astronomical and cosmical theories.

The word lawka means a whole revolution of nature. The world is being constantly destroyed and reproduced, but each lawka lasts an incalculable length of years. It is divided into four periods, and it is not till the arrival of the fourth period that man appears upon earth. During that last period, divided into sixty-four Andrakaps, the life of man must, in each Andrakap, wax from ten years to an Athinkaya (a time represented by a unit and a hundred and

sixty-four ciphers, one and a half quintillion years), and then gradually wane to ten years again, on account respectively of the merit and demerit in the world. We are now in the waning term of the eleventh Andrakap. The Buddhas only appear upon earth during the waning season of man's life, chiefly of course to stay the increasing influence of evil by preaching the law, and also because when man's life is slowly lengthening to an Athinkaya he is not so disposed to listen to their teaching. 100,000 years before the destruction of the world the Dewahs come down from their six blissful seats and wander about the earth with dishevelled hair and mournful garb, proclaiming the sad tidings of the impending destruction of the world. Once again a hundred years before the cataclysm they come, and all mankind strives to raise itself beyond the influence of the destroying element. The world must be destroyed in any case, but there are three great principles of demerit which determine by what means the catastrophe will be effected. Concupiscence is the most common and the least heinous of these principles, and the world of the lustful will be destroyed by fire. Next comes anger, a more grievous sin than concupiscence, and the world ruined by the principle of anger will be destroyed by water. Worst of all is the sin of ignorance. The world of the ignorant will be scattered about the bounds of space by a mighty rushing wind, which beginning so gently as barely to move the leaves and flowers, ends by breaking up with its irresistible force the vast bulk of Mount Myemmoh and the Sekyahwala circle of hills. Of sixty-four worlds, fifty-six are destroyed by fire, seven by water, and one by wind. Fire reaches to the fifth seat of the Rupa, the beings called Perfect. Water mounts higher by three seats to the eighth of the Byammahs, and wind one seat beyond this. Out of the thirty-one seats of the world there remain therefore only eleven undestroyed. The Four States of Punishment, the abode of man, the six blissful seats of Nats ; and five, eight or nine of the lofty dwellings of the Rupa, according to the destroying agent, are altogether overwhelmed and dispersed throughout space. The seven highest seats of the Byammahs and the four of Arupa, where dwell the Immaterials, who having broken all ties with the material world, are ripe

for Neh'ban, these eleven seats only remain constantly undisturbed.

Then there is chaos for an athinkaya. When that mighty season has passed, rain begins to fall again throughout infinity. Fire, water, or wind may destroy the world, but water alone can reproduce it, though both the sun and the wind have minor parts to play. The drops gradually increase in size till they reach the volume of five, ten, a hundred, even a thousand yoozanas (a yoozana being about twelve miles English). The wind blows the water together in the spot occupied by the last world. A greasy scum gathers on the surface. The action of the sun gradually hardens this into a crust, which eventually assumes the exact appearance and shape of the last world. The Lord Buddha himself, it is written, did not know which was the first world and which would be the last. Many learned writers say that there is neither a beginning nor an end to the production and destruction of worlds. It will go on for ever like a great wheel, even as the great wheel of the Law itself. Since sorrow then is shadow to life, how should all beings strive to escape from the vortex of existences? In the *Abeedamma* we read that there are two descriptions of worlds, called Thohn-nya Kabah and A-thohn-nya Kabah, that is to say, worlds to which the Buddhas came, and those to which they did not come. Some think that the latter kind of worlds must have been uninhabited. However that may be, it is certain that the law has always existed. It existed Kalpas and Mahakalpas before the first Budh came to this earth. The Buddhas only revive the knowledge of it among creatures upon the painful ladder of existence. Our present world, called Badda, has been particularly favoured. Already four Buddhas have appeared, and when the dispensation of Shin Gautama shall have passed away two thousand five hundred years hence, there will come another. Areemadehya, whose stature will exceed the highest mountains in all the Southern Island.

The system of the world as explained by the Buddhist Yahandas is somewhat different from that adopted by western men of science. In the centre is the Myemmoh Toung, Mount Meru, the highest peak of all the world. Its shape

is somewhat peculiar, like a cask floating end upwards in water. A height of 84,000 yoozanas above the sea is counterbalanced by as many of depth below the surface. It is supported on three feet, each a huge ruby or carbuncle. In the space between these feet dwell the Athooya, the Nats who were tempted to drink by new arrivals in the seat of Tohtheeta, and when overcome by the liquor were hurled into the sea by their crafty rivals. At various heights on the central mountain are ranged the six blissful seats of the Dewahs, but many of them dwell elsewhere. Thus, for example, the sun, the moon, and most of the stars and planets are simply gorgeous dwellings of Nats. Away in the empyrean, rising perpendicularly one above the other, are the sixteen seats of Rupa, where the Byammahs, the Perfect, dwell. These have got rid of almost all the passions, but especially of concupiscence. It is not till they have freed themselves from all affection for matter and material things that they can pass beyond to the incalculable heights of the four seats of Arupa, where the Immaterials dwell in a state of sublimest contemplation waiting only for the moment when they shall pass beyond into Neh'ban. Down below the earth, in a mass of hard rock, are the eight great Hells and the numberless smaller ones. Surrounding the Myemmoh Toung and girdling round the earth are the seven ranges of the Sekyahwala mountains, with seven seas interposed. In the sea round about Mount Myemmoh, the great Thamohddaya Ocean, are the four great islands—Ohttayakooroo to the north, Pyohppaweedayha to the east, Aparagawyan to the west, and Zampoodeepa to the south. In the Southern Island dwells the race of man. Each of the great islands has five hundred smaller ones round about it, and in these islands dwell the English and other nations other than the Buddhists and the Indian heretics.

The Thamohddaya sea is too stormy to allow of any one passing from one of the great islands to any other. The Southern Island is the largest, and is shaped like a trapezium. The Western Island is like the full moon, the Northern is square, and Pyohppaweedayha is shaped like the moon in her quarters. The shape of the head of the different inhabitants follows the shape of the island, and the different sides

of Mount Meru give their different colours to each Island. Thus the Eastern Island is all white from being opposite to the silver face of the mountain; the Western is green, because on that side Myemmoh is of glass; the Northern Island glitters like gold, and the Southern is a pale-coloured brown-like carbuncle. Each island is named from the great tree which grows upon it and forms the sacred insignia of the island. Thus the Southern Island is named from the Zampoo tree, the great Eugenia.

The Eastern, Western, and Northern islands are very pleasant to dwell in, but especially the Northern. There the people live to the age of a thousand years, and always appear to be no more than eighteen. In the other islands they only live to be five hundred. In other respects the Northern Island is a regular land of Cockayne. The fabled Padaytha Bin, elsewhere only found in the happy countries of the Nats, grows there. From its bounteous branches hang the most gorgeous dresses of every variety of colour, and the happy islanders have only to take them off. Nor are they at any necessity to till the ground to procure themselves food. From this tree they obtain also an abundant supply of a most excellent kind of rice, already husked to their hands. All that they have to do is to place it on a certain large stone, and it is forthwith cooked, and upon the branches of the trees round about appear the most dainty meats. Truly the Northern islanders have a most enviable existence. But in one respect, like the inhabitants of the Eastern and Western isles, they are unhappy. They are always born back to the same island. They cannot raise themselves in the scale of being, like the otherwise sorrowful Southern islanders. Only in Zampoodeepa do the Buddhas appear to teach the law and free the people from constant deaths and reappearances. From Tahingaya, the first Buddha, to Shin Gautama, under whose dispensation we now live, there have been twenty-eight Buddhas, and all of them have come to the great Southern Island. To Byammahs, to Nats, even to animals and the agonised dwellers in the lowest hells, the blessed words have come, but never to those other dwellers in the islands of the great sea Thamohddaya. Thus are men enabled to attain to the state of Nats, to pass through

the seats of Rupa and Arupa, until finally, freed from passion and sorrow and the trammels of matter, they sink into the bliss of Neh'ban. Therefore have pious writers of old called the Southern Island Neh'ban's ferry.

Down below the earth, in the deepest recesses of the Southern Island, are the eight great Hells, surrounded by 40,040 smaller ones. Four of the great Hells are called Awidzee, and in addition to other tortures, terrible flames leap from wall to wall across the monstrous space, and extend on all sides beyond for a thousand yoozanas. The other four are called Lawkantyè, and there, instead of flames, we find hideous cold. A day in any of these places of torment is as long as thousands of mundane years.

The world having been created is as yet uninhabited. Our present earth, Badda, was peopled in the following way. From the seats of Zahn, to which the destructive element had not reached, came down certain Byammahs, some say three, some as many as nine. Holy people as they were and freed from all passions, they existed at first, like Adam and Eve, in a state of perfect bliss and innocence. They were not as the Kahma, the generating beings of the Four States of Punishment and the Seven States of Happiness—that of man and the six seats of Nats. But, like Adam and Eve, they fell into sin and thence into misery. First we read that they prayed for light. We may imagine that already the spiritual light had forsaken them, for in answer to their prayers appeared the sun, the moon, and the stars. The holy people had hitherto lived on a flavoured earth, which, however, driven away by their growing desire for matter, vanished and gave place to another species of food, a sweet creeping plant called Pahdahlahtah. This was perfect in odour and flavour, but still the appetites of the people grew, and the Pahdahlahtah was taken away and in its place appeared the Thalay san, a peculiarly fine kind of rice, which grew ready husked, and had only to be put in a pot, when it would cook itself. But by eating the Thalay rice, the Byammahs became more and more gross, until, like Adam and Eve after eating the apple, they attained a knowledge of good and evil, and marriage was instituted. After this the

Thalay san became more and more scarce. At first, no matter how much was eaten, at night the portion which had been cut during the day reappeared; but when the first people fell into the sin of lust the rice gradually vanished. Where the rice was cut in the morning, there remained a bare patch at night. Since then man has had to labour, and earn his bread with the sweat of his brow.

Owing to the scarcity, crime first appeared in the world. One man, fearing that his stock would not last him, went and stole from his neighbours' barns. Thus theft was the first crime committed in the world. The man whose rice was stolen at first only scolded the thief and let him go. The robber, however, did not care for this, and came back a second and a third time. The third time he was seized and beaten. Thus out of the original crime of thievery arose abuse, reviling, assault, falsehood, and then punishments. In this way did crime and consequently law and justice take their origin, and have lasted since the very beginning of the world. Hitherto on account of the happy state in which the people had lived, without crime and without punishments, every one had been equal, and there had been no necessity for marking different grades. As, however, crime increased, and with it revenge, more or less sweeping according to temperament, the people took counsel together and resolved to appoint a man to be ruler over them, who should regulate their affairs and punish wrong-doers. Thus a king was first appointed, and his revenue was derived from tithes given by the people, Each man set apart a tenth of his thalay san for the support of the king. The tithe system was kept up among the Burmese, the most direct in descent from the original people, until a few years ago. The kings extended the system. The rulers and governors of provinces received in place of salary the tithes of the districts which were under their charge. But the late king, Mindohn Min, finding that with unscrupulous men the method was liable to abuse, abolished the system of tithes, and introduced the English method of paying a regular salary. It did not, however, work well. Many of the myo-sahs, finding that they did not receive their money regularly from the State, continued to exact tithes as before, only secretly and with many cunning devices to hide

what they were doing. It is probable, therefore, that the custom of the ancients would have been reintroduced.

The appointment of a ruler to punish crime was therefore the second source of the law, and the first source of the administration of justice. The first king chosen was a Payahloung, a person destined in future ages to be a Buddha, and therefore of great sanctity and wisdom, and one who strictly conformed to the five natural and religious laws incumbent on all men, namely, not to murder, steal, commit adultery, drink fermented liquors, or speak falsely. From these immediately sprang the four thingahas or kingly laws, and the first laws laid down by the Payah-loung were with regard to the twenty-five descriptions of theft, the ten kinds of assault, and the twenty-seven kinds of abusive language.

Notwithstanding the institution of a source of administrative justice, crime continued to increase, and those who wished to escape from its evil influences retired to the jungles and there built small houses for themselves, or gained a living by begging from village to village. Thus rose the caste of the Brahmins. Those who built themselves houses and acquired wealth by agriculture and trade, were called thatay thoo-gywè, rich men, while those who were unfortunate and oppressed sank into the state of poverty and were called thoo sinyè. Thus arose the legal classification of the people.

The first king, Mahahthamada as he was called, probably had a written code, but it has been superseded or lost. The laws which now guide us were drawn up by Menu, originally a cowherd, but afterwards a minister. To these laws all others owe their existence, for we read that in Greece, the earliest civilised country in Europe, Menu was styled Minos in Crete, and first gave them laws. In this way polity was established in the Southern Island. The original people soon greatly increased, and multiplied, and dispersed themselves not only all over the mainland, but some even went to the smaller islands round about, as did the English to the Pyee Gyee. Just as the children of one father take different names, so the different peoples took to themselves different titles, according to the part of the earth they settled in. Just also as some children in a family are good

and some bad, so a few races preserved the sacred law of the Lord Buddha, and some fell away into lamentable heresies. Many of them still retain reminiscences of the teachings of the Great Master. Thus the Bible of the Christians contains moral precepts in a great measure identical with the sentiments conveyed in the thoughts or sermons of the Lord Buddha. There is even confirmation, in the mention of the ages of Methuselah and other men of old, of the doctrine of the waxing and waning term of human life. Some learned Sadaws have held that the Lord Jesus is Dewadat, the cousin of Shin Gautama, who was always trying to overthrow the good works of the Buddha; and it is well known that the Siamese speak of the evil Dewadat as the God of Europe, and the causer of all the evil in the world. This opinion is not, however, generally held, and the best thing a Burman can wish for a good Englishman is that in some future existence, as a reward of good works, he may be born a Buddhist and if possible a Burman. For that the Burmese are most nearly descended from the original holy people, their name Byammah or Bamah evidently shows, while no other nation preserves the sacred law more carefully and more exactly in its form as it came from the lips of the Lord Buddha himself. Moreover, the Burmese monarchs retain the titles given to Mahahthamada, the first king, and his immediate successors, and therefore they rank above all others.

# CHAPTER XI

## THE LADDER OF EXISTENCE

NOTWITHSTANDING the change, the pain, and the vanity of everything upon earth, yet the Loo-pyee, the Manoht-thabohng, the state of man, is desirable beyond all others. Transience, misery, unreality, prevail in all the thirty-one seats of the world, even in the twenty superior heavens, where those acted on by Kahma, generating beings, find no entrance. The Dewahs come down to our earth from their six seats of bliss; the Byammahs, even to the fourth state of Zahn, are occasionally found in earthly guise in the precincts of holy monasteries; even Yahandas, who have entered into Thohda, the current of perfection, and after death attain the dreamful joy of Neh'ban, the cessation from existence, even these immaterial beings diffuse a saintly presence over the Southern Island. The great Lord Gautama appeared in the seat of man and preached the sacred law, and he preached it there because all the twenty-seven Buddhas before him had done the same, and when he preached it on that soft Indian eve,

I know it writ that they who heard
Were more—lakhs more—crores more—than could be seen,
For all the Devas and the Dead thronged there,
Till Heaven was emptied to the seventh zone,
And uttermost dark Hells opened their bars;
Also the daylight lingered past its time
In rose-leaf radiance on the watching peaks,
So that it seemed Night listened in the glens
And Noon upon the mountains; yea! they write,
The Evening stood between them like some maid,
Celestial, love-struck, rapt; the smooth-rolled clouds
Her braided hair; the studded stars the pearls

And diamonds of her coronal; the moon
Her forehead jewel, and the deepening dark
Her woven garments. 'Twas her close-held breath
Which came in scented sighs across the lawns
While our Lord taught, and, while he taught, who heard—
Though he were stranger in the land, or slave,
High caste or low, come of the Aryan blood,
Or Mlech or Jungle-dweller, seemed to hear
What tongue his fellows talked. Nay, outside those
Who crowded by the river, great and small,
The birds and beasts and creeping things—'tis writ—
Had sense of Buddha's vast embracing love
And took the promise of his piteous speech;
So that their lives—prisoned in shape of ape,
Tiger, or deer, shagged bear, jackal, or wolf,
Foul-feeding kite, pearled dove, or peacock gemmed,
Squat toad, or speckled serpent, lizard, bat;
Yea, or of fish fanning the river-waves—
Touched meekly at the skirts of brotherhood
With man who hath less innocence than these;
And in mute gladness knew their bondage broke
Whilst Buddha spake these things before the King.

*The Light of Asia.*

And since that time some few have passed from our earth to Neh'ban, where the silence lives; "seeking nothing, they gained all." But far the most have failed; some have sunk to the Four States of Punishment; some have risen to the blissful seats of Nats; fewer have passed beyond to the meditative realms of Zahn.

It is written that the life of man waxes from ten years to the huge period of an Athinkaya, and then wanes to ten years again. How is it, then, that some men live beyond a hundred years, and others die almost ere they have drawn breath? The reason is that some have taken no life at all in previous existences, and that others have, unwittingly perhaps, destroyed many creatures, and their own existence is correspondingly graduated. To maintain his dignity of man it is absolutely necessary that a human being must observe, as far as his powers admit, the Five great Precepts. Failure to observe these will infallibly result in a fall in the next existence into the States of Punishment.

It will be well to begin the ladder of existence at the lowest rung, at the worst of these four states. This is Nga-yè, hell—the most hideous of all. Even in Nga-yè

there are gradations: the one mighty seat is divided into eight great holds, arranged one below the other, all with punishments so terrible that none can be said to exceed any other in hideousness. The names of all the eight great chambers, from Thehnzoh above to Awizee the nethermost hell, are given, but a detailed catalogue is unnecessary. Each great hell is surrounded by sixteen inferior places of torture called Ohtthad-daret. From west to east the flames stream through all the mighty space and pass through on the other side to a distance of a thousand yoozanas, and from east to west the same. From north to south, from Nadir to Pole, and Pole to Nadir, it is the same, and yet the torments of this heat are but a tithe of the gruesome tortures the sinner must suffer. The life of the Dewahs in Tawadehntha is reckoned at sixteen million human years. That period is but as a day and night in Kahlathoht, the second hell. Thirty such days and nights make a month, twelve months one year; and the wicked in the Kahlathoht hell must pass one thousand such horrible years. The Nats in Toht-theeta live five hundred and seventy-six million years, which is but as one revolving sun and moon to the tenants of Yawruwa. Of such appalling days they must make up a tale of four thousand agonising years. The miserable wretches in Awizee work out the evil of their sins only in the space of an Andrakap, a period so vast that the mind cannot grasp it. As if these punishments were not sufficient to scare the weak and ignorant from sin, it has been revealed what other tortures await the damned. In one of the Ten Great Sacred Mystery Plays it is related how a pious prince was shown the horrors of hell. The terrible pictures of the sixth book of the *Æneid*, the awful imaginings of Dante's poem, are outdone by the flesh-creeping minuteness of the Naymee Zaht. The prince saw men devoured by five-headed dogs, by famished vultures, by loathsome crows, the flesh being renewed as fast as the foul creatures tore it away; he saw others crushed beneath the weight of vast white-hot mountains, stretched on fiery bars and cut up with burning knives and flaming saws, their hearts slowly scratched and pierced with fiery needles, flame entering at the mouth and licking up the vitals, fiends all about, hacking, hewing, stabbing,

lacerating the body with all that the human mind has imagined hideous, and all this, and ten times more, which it were only disgusting to write down, continued with never-abated torture to the wretched victims. The lesser hells are no less horrible; that of ordure, where huge stinging serpents and gnawing worms fasten on the sinners who are there immersed; those of burning coals, swords and knives, molten lead, fiery hammers which crush the bones at every stroke; that where the heart, lungs, and liver are torn out with hooks and slowly sliced and ever renewed. Occasionally the damned are transferred to the Lawkantyè hells, situated in the intermediate spaces between the Sekyah worlds, where the tortures are those of frightful cold. Enough, however, has been said about the horrors of hell. The crimes which condemn a man, and the hell to which he is sent, are all duly recorded; but as one hell is as bad as another, it is unnecessary to recount these particulars. Suffice it to say that the man who scoffs at the Buddha and derides the law will remain, throughout a whole revolution of nature, an entire Lawka, transfixed head downwards on a red-hot spit, in the lowest hell, hacked, gnawed, crushed, and beaten by all that is most awesome in all the flaming realms.[1]

The State of Punishment above that of hell is that of the Thoorakè. Their miseries are various. Some are keepers of hell by day or by night, themselves suffering all the horror of the terrible heat, assuming the form of man at other times. Others feed on their own flesh and blood, and tear themselves with great hooks. Some are six miles high, with projecting crab's eyes, short lids, and a mouth the size of an ordinary mortal's, so that they are incessantly tormented by hunger. Above them are the

[1] There are twenty-one kinds of people who will fall into the lowest hell. Nineteen, however, if they see the error of their ways, and attend the pagodas with goodly offerings, may be redeemed; but the hunter and the fisherman cannot be saved. The impious Dewadat, cousin and brother-in-law of the Buddha, who tried to kill him, suffers terrible punishment. His feet are sunk ankle-deep in burning marl. His head is incased in a red-hot pan that caps it down to the lobe of the ears. Two large red-hot bars transfix him from back to front, two horizontally from right to left, and one impales him from head to foot. But since he repented when he sank into the earth to his doom, he will become a Pyitsega Buddha, under the name of Aheesara, in coming ages.

Pyehtta, who in many respects resemble them in their sufferings. They wander on desert sea-shores and mountains, and in dismal forests, far from the abodes of man, naked and continually lamenting. Some have huge bodies with a mouth no larger than the eye of a needle, so that they can never satiate their craving for food. Others have huge, gluttonous mouths, always seeking to devour, but with no stomach in which the food can be received. Maggots, earth-worms, ants, and the like are often called Pyehtta, because they live on excrements and all manner of filth. This state is the one specially assigned to misers and niggardly, uncharitable people.

The highest of the Four States of Punishment is that of Tarehsan, or animals. Those who do not keep a guard over their passions, who are abusive, and who refrain from giving alms, will fall into the Bohng of animals. Just as one man by reason of previous merits is born a prince, while another barely scrapes into human existence as an outcast pagoda slave, a grave-digger, a leper, or a heretic, so there are grades in the state of animals. To be an elephant is of course nearly as good as being a man; to be a white elephant is usually very much better. Any herbivorous animal is in a better state than a creature which eats flesh. Lions, tigers, and all life-destroying creatures are particularly undesirable transincorporations. The vulture is highly honoured because it never takes life, but lives entirely on carrion. Some animals are particularly esteemed as having been incarnations of the Lord Buddha. Such are the white elephant, the hare, the pigeon. Shin Gautama's first existence was in the form of a little bird, and all the stages he passed through in after existences are recorded in the Ten Great Zahts and the five hundred and ten minor tales. He who would cross the ferry to Neh'ban may learn from them how he may do so, and how miserable the toil is. Who would not seek the higher paths when he sees what the alternative is?

Raised from the Four States of Punishment to the Manoht-tha Bohng, where as man the law is open to his study, the creature on his upward path should not be lightly stayed. To rise from the seat of man to that of Nats seems

simple. Observe but the Five Precepts, give alms, live peaceably with all men, attend regularly at the pagodas on the appointed days that the image and model there presented to you may strengthen your resolution, do but live a respectable life, and the end is gained; you pass to the dwellings of the Dewahs, there to spend long years of bliss. Good works will do much, but it is especially necessary to observe the Five Precepts. You must keep them in your mind every day, as you put your clothes on your body. The Ten Precepts must be kept on holy days, four times in every lunar month and throughout all Lent; these, and the daily giving of alms to the mendicants, will save you; your next existence will be in the Heavens of the Nats.

The Nat-pyee Chouk-tap, the six blissful seats, the highest of the Kahma Bohng, the worlds of passion, are ranged on and around Mount Myemmoh. Like the eight Hells they all have names, beginning with Zatoo-ma-harit and ending with Para-nehmmeeta Wot-thawatee. The second and the fourth Heavens are the best known; for to Tawadehntha the Lord Buddha ascended in three steps to preach the law to his mother, the sainted Queen Maya, and countless Byammahs and Immaterials from the far realms of Rupa and Arupa came to hear; and from Toht-theeta the embryo Budh descended to take flesh as Prince Theidat. The length of life in Tawadehntha is a thousand Dewah's years, that is, in earthly reckoning, nine millions. Similarly the four thousand of Toht-theeta are in human calendars five hundred and seventy-six million years.

Take up any book of fairy tales you have; revive your recollection of the *Arabian Nights*; recall any dream when you thought you had made your fortune, and you have a picture of the six blissful seats. A vision of song and dancing, beautiful and fragrant flowers, delicious fruits, palm-trees bearing, in place of leaves, rich garments and priceless ornaments and dainty cates, great gorgeous palaces with crystal pavements, golden columns and jewelled walls; a tinkling of gold and silver bells, intoxicating music—everything the most fervid imagination can picture, all are found in these happy realms. Prince Naymee was granted a sight of them as well as of the horrors of hell.

Passion still prevails, but it becomes less and less sensual the higher we rise. In Toht-theeta a touch of the hand satisfies love; in the fifth seat, lovers simply gaze on each other; and in the sixth, existence in the same place is enough. The Nat of the highest Bohng is not far from the twenty superior heavens.

Passage to the Dewah seats is obtained by the strict observance of the precepts and the regular performance of good works; the step beyond can only be accomplished by the aid of the intellect. Ignorance is always the chief hindrance to rise in the scale of worlds; it is especially so in the case of the superior heavens. The twenty higher seats can only be reached by concentrated meditation; by the performance of good works, not outwardly by the body, but inwardly by the soul. The three fundamental principles of Anehsa, Dohkka, Anatta—transience, pain, vanity—must first be intently examined. Then we must pass on through the five kinds of meditation, the highest of which is Oopekka, which brings perfect fixity, whence originates callousness to pleasure or pain, scorn or affection. Thus we pass through the successive stages of contemplation which lead us through the sixteen seats of Rupa, each of which constitute the first, second, and third Zahns—Thawtapan, Thakadagam, Anagam; the tenth and eleventh seats form the fourth Zahn, and in the five highest, the Yahandas have entered on Thohda, on the current of perfection.

Thus we reach to the verge of the four immaterial superior heavens. To enter these we must get rid of all affection for matter. The thirty-two parts of the body are often mentioned in prayer by pious Buddhists, each part with its forty-four subdivisions. On these we must ponder till we understand and see the worthlessness of them. Then we must repeat ten thousand times "the firmament, or the æther, is immeasurable," till at length we reach the first Seht or idea of Arupa.

Thence we progress in contempt for matter till at last we are delivered from the three Thagnya, or false persuasions, and reaching the topmost seat of Arupa, Naywa-thagnya-nathagnya-yatana, tremble on the verge of Neh'ban.

What is Neh'ban?

If any teach Nirvana is to cease,
Say unto such they lie;
If any teach Nirvana is to live,
Say unto such they err.

The common illustration of the schools will not suffice for matter-of-fact Western heretics. You tell them life is like a lamp, with its wick and its little lake of oil. It may be kindled and extinguished many times, fresh oil may be added, other lamps kindled from it, but at length the oil is exhausted, the flame flickers and dies away for ever. That is annihilation, you say. It is not. When a man dies and goes to Neh'ban he ceases to be individualised; he is no more agitated by existence, wretched in itself, still more wretched from the woes it reveals in others; he falls into a calm and never-ending cessation of existence; he knows nothing of others, or of the world, and so is a stranger to all feelings of joy or sorrow; he contemplates fixedly the abstract truth, which even the highest Immaterials cannot, perpetually; but he is not annihilated as the heretics assert; nor does he slip, like the dew-drop, into the shining sea; he is not absorbed into the supreme Buddha, as the Brahmins loosely say; he remains perpetually in a sacred calm, unmoved by any feeling whatever, in lifeless, timeless bliss.

The teachers strive to give a detailed explanation, but who can know? who can tell for certain the composition and economy of even the nearest star? They tell us this: Neh'ban is the extinction of Kan, the soul of recurring existences, the influence of merits and demerits, exemption from which means utter cessation from existences; Neh'ban is the stifling of Seht, the fire of passions, the entire hundred and twenty volitions and desires; Neh'ban is the cessation of Ootoo, exemption from revolving years, from the changes of seasons, from the variations of heat and cold, darkness and light; Neh'ban is the death of Ahahya, taste, typifying all the senses; Neh'ban is, in fact, the going out of all that we know as making up a living being; there remains behind what no one can name and few even picture to themselves, and those who attempt it do so according to their individual fancies.[1]

[1] When a person recovers from a grievous illness we can only say that to be

In regard to the Lord Buddha himself, we are told that there are in reality three stages in Neh'ban. The first was the Neh'ban of Keelaytha, of the earthly passions, when under the Baw-dee Bin, the sacred banyan-tree, he renounced all and became a Buddha. The second was the Neh'ban of Khanda, when near Kohthaynarohn, he expired in the grove of sahl-trees, when the five supports of existence gave way and he finally departed from the thirty-one seats of the world. The third and last, the Neh'ban of Daht, will not be for nearly two thousand five hundred years, five thousand from the day of his death. Then the duration of the Great Master's teachings will have ceased, his cycle will have lapsed, and all his relics from all parts of the world will be miraculously gathered together into the place where the original Baw-dee Bin stood; there will be many wondrous signs, and then all but the memory of him will be gone, the complete Neh'ban will have been attained.

The definition may be vague, and the monks of Burma, Siam, Japan, Ceylon, Thibet, and China may each have their own definition, but there is the same difficulty to be found in all religions with regard to the last mystery. Who can find agreement in the variety of Christian descriptions of the future life, where one places happiness in the eternal singing of songs and in feastings, another in gazing on the Deity, a third, with greater modesty, hopes to creep in by the door of which St. Peter holds the keys? Buddhists have in their six heavens and twenty superior seats a choice of every kind of bliss, suited to every liking. They have the Islamite delights of sense in the heavens of Dewas with the houri nat-daughters. Then for the various kinds of meditation and mysticism they have the contemplative Byammah seats, while the four seats of Arupa afford room for the most transcendental speculation.

Yet all these ideal realms of phantasy—the dreams of sense, of contemplation and mystic trance—have nothing to do with the state of Neh'ban. It is not a "nothing." A "nothing" that can be imagined is an all, for according to the laws of thought, non-existence can only be understood

free from infirmities is to recover one's health. So we say that a man has attained to Neh'ban when he is freed from the sorrows of existences.

in a relative sense. The Buddhist system is much too logical to trouble itself with such incomprehensible problems, and in order to create no false impressions, the teachers surround the last state with the utmost possible uncertainty of expression. The Buddhist yearns to return from the endless whirl and turmoil of existences to the calm of the first beginning.

# CHAPTER XII

## THE NOBLE ORDER OF THE YELLOW ROBE

> That noble order of the yellow robe
> Which to this day standeth to help the world.

ALL living creatures are plodding on

> the noble Eightfold Path which brings to peace ;
> By lower or by upper heights it goes,
> The firm soul hastes, the feeble tarries. All
> Will reach the sun-lit snows.

The monks in Lower Burma are fond of the comparison which steam lends them now. The holy fraternity are pushing on by mail train to the emancipation from constant successions of new births, while the weary layman toils along the dusty road on foot, or at best in a jolting bullock-cart ; the mendicant pushes up the stream of life in a huge throbbing paddle steamer ; the man yet in the world struggles along painfully against the current, and whirled about by eddies in a rude canoe. Why, then, cannot all set forth on the path alike? Partly because of ignorance and its consequences ; partly because of the kan which forms each man's life :

> The books say well, my Brothers ! each man's life
> The outcome of his former living is,
> The bygone wrongs bring forth sorrows and woes,
> The bygone right breeds bliss.

A man's kan may be sufficient to gain him existence as a human being, but not enough to sustain him in the noble life of the yahan. He may enter the noble order, he must, indeed, if he would be other than a brute beast ; but his kan, the sum of actions that make up his life, the soul of

transmigrations, forces him to leave and enter the forest of the world, some from want of the gift of continence, some from ambition and desire for worldly power, some from a seeking after wealth, all from the predominance of some one of the hundred and twenty seht that incapacitate a man for the calm meditative life of the pyin-sin.

In the Lord Buddha's time, when a man adopted the faith, the requisites were belief in his teaching, a willingness to live in poverty and chastity, and under strict rules. All the applicant had to do was to renounce the ordinary pursuits of life, give up all his goods, take the vows, and he was forthwith a member of the Then-ga. From that time forward he lived in poverty, was dependent upon alms for his food, and upon charity for a shelter for his head; he was a behkkhoo, a mendicant, and only those who were such were Buddhists. But as the believers increased, it was evident that all could not wholly adopt the religious life. Many had faith, but not faith enough to support them in the strict rule of the society, and soon Buddhists became divided into the two classes of laymen who adopted and believed in the religious tenets, and the religious who abandoned the world entirely, and strove only to lead the higher life. Hence also arose the hierarchy of the order, which exists to a certain extent in Burma, though very far from approaching the completeness of the system of Thibet, where there is a pontifical court, an elective sacerdotal chief, and a college of superior Lamas. In this respect, however, Burman Buddhism is as much closer to the primitive order in polity as it is in exact observance of the ordinations of the Weenee. Theoretically, in the sacred assembly there are but three classes:

The shin, the novice, who has put on the yellow robe without becoming a professed member of the order, and probably with no other desire than that of obtaining his "humanity." These are called ko-yins, moung-shins, and a variety of other names.

The oo-pyin-sin, those who, having lived a certain time in the monastery, have been formally admitted to the assembly with a prescribed ceremony, whereby the title of yahan is solemnly conferred. These are the pyit-shin, or religious.

Finally, there is the pohn-gyee, the "Great Glory," who

by virtue of prolonged stay—ten years is the minimum—has proved his steadfastness and unflinching self-denial.

This division of the fraternity is not far removed from the classification of Shin Gautama's own time, when all people were regarded and addressed as dahyaka, laymen, who hear the preaching of the law, but are not yet converted to a firm acceptance of it; or oopathaka, not merely hearers of the law, but steadfast believers and practisers of its precepts. Nowadays the term dahyaka is applicable to all mankind, for it is open to all to seek for refuge in the Law of Good.

Practically, however, there is a slightly extended distinction of rank.

1. The Shin, the postulant.

2. The Pyit-shin, the religious, the full member of the order.

3. The Sayah, always a pohn-gyee, the head of each kyoung, or religious house, who controls all the inmates.

4. The Geing-oke, the provincial, who has a jurisdiction extending over all the monasteries of a cluster of villages or over a whole district, giving advice in all the affairs of these communities, enforcing the rules against malcontents, and correcting any abuses.

5. The Sadaw, a royal teacher, or vicar-general of the order, who manages the entire affairs of the whole country, both Burma and the Shan States, in religious matters. These live in or near Mandalay, being summoned thither on their appointment. There are ordinarily eight of them, all honoured with the title of Tha-thana-peing, *i.e.* supreme in matters appertaining to religion. It is a mistake to speak of *the* Tha-thana-peing as a sort of Burmese Buddhist pope. There is no such approximation to the heterodox Buddhism of Thibet, unless indeed the other sadaw-gyees have died, and there is but one remaining.

The teacher of the reigning king is always created a Sadaw, if indeed he has not been one before he was called upon to take a royal pupil. The respect paid to him by the king is paid, not as to the head of the religion, but as to the personal teacher. The Burman in his prayers, or rather his meditations for the good of others, prays for his teacher

before his parents. The five pleasant things in the world are: the shade of trees, the shade of parents, the shade of teachers, the shade of princes, the shade of the Buddha.

It is this republican tendency of Buddhism that gives it such a wonderful hold on the people. Rank does not confer on the mendicant greater honour, or release him from any of his obligations. The most learned and famous Sadaw must go forth every morning to beg his daily food. If he is very aged and decrepit he may be excused to some extent, but every now and again he must totter forth to preserve the letter of the law and show a proper example of humility. His dress is the same as that of the most recently admitted ko-yin, and in the eyes of the world he holds honour, not because he controls the affairs of the assembly, but because he is so close to the verge of Neh'ban. This feeling extends beyond the order into ordinary life. The religion brings all men down to the same level. The poor man may be a king of nats in the next life; the wealthy sinner may frizzle in the awful pains of hell. There is no difference between man and man but that which is established by superiority in virtue; and hence it is that the state of women among Buddhists is so very much higher than it is among Oriental peoples, who do not hold by that faith. The Burmese woman enjoys many rights which her European sister is even now clamouring for.

We have seen that the whole male population of Burma enters the monastery, and that the great majority leave after a very short stay. Some, however, grow fond of the monastic ways, and remain to study and qualify themselves to be mendicants. In becoming pyin-sin they do not acquire any new spiritual power, nor do they constitute themselves directly teachers of the people. In a religious system, which acknowledges no supreme Deity, it is impossible for any one to intercede with a Creator whose existence is denied, in behalf of a man who can only attain to a higher state by his own pious life and earnest self-denial. The religious are merely initiated into a higher stage, and become members of an order in which every individual is aiming at a greater degree of sanctity. The doors of the kyoung are always open as well to those who wish to enter as to those who wish to leave it. The longest stayer has the greatest honour.

A visitor monk, who has the greater number of wahs, who has passed many lenten seasons in his yellow robe, will be shekhoh'd to, will receive the homage of the head of the monastery, even if he be a geing-oke, and the stranger but a simple pohn-gyee.

In his ordination, therefore, the pyin-sin takes upon himself no burden in the shape of a cure of souls. He is not a priest like the Christian minister, who undertakes to guide others to salvation. He has no trouble for his food ; a pious and kindly population supplies him far beyond his requirements, and expects no service in return for this support. He has no sermons to prepare ; it is not expected that he will preach the law, and when of his own accord he occasionally does give an exposition, it is not any feeble excogitation of his own, but the thoughts and words of the Great Master himself, or of the highest and noblest of the men of old, that he delivers. His natural rest is never broken in upon by calls to administer consolation and comfort to the sick and the dying. Even his leisure is seldom interrupted to be present at the last rites for the dead. He is not a minister of religion, and all he has to do is to seek his own deliverance and salvation. All that is compulsory on him is the observance of continence, poverty, and humility, with tenderness to all living things, abstraction from the world, and a strict observance of a number of moral precepts, all tending to inculcate these things. It is curious perhaps, therefore, that greater numbers do not don the yellow robe. As it is, however, there is no lack of them.

Previous to admission the postulant must have reached the age of twenty years and have obtained his parents' permission.[1] The candidate must also give proof of a sufficient knowledge of the Payeht-gyee, the Padee-seht, the three Beetaghats, and the like. When it is understood that he has given satisfaction in these subjects, his friends provide for him the complete equipment of a mendicant, the sacred

[1] The origin of this stipulation dates from the earliest times. When Gautama attained the Buddhaship his half-brother Nanda was next heir, and was about to be proclaimed Crown Prince when he was persuaded to become yahan. Thereupon Thoodaw-dana, the king, obtained a promise from the Buddha that ever after none should put on the celibate robe without his parents' consent.

eight utensils which a pyin-sin cannot do without. These are :—

1. The dookoht, a piece of yellow cloth of rectangular shape, folded many times and worn over the left shoulder, with the ends hanging down behind and before.

2. The kohwoot, a piece of cloth worn round the loins and reaching to the ankles.

3. The thengbeing, a square-shaped cloth, yellow like the others, thrown cloak-fashion over the chest and shoulders, and coming down as far as the knees.

4. The thabeht, or begging-pot, worn suspended round the neck by a cord. It is shaped like a large circular soup-tureen with a rounded bottom, and has no lid. This must be carried round every morning to receive the alms of the pious.

5. The kaban, a leathern girdle used for binding on the kohwoot.

6. The pè-koht, a short-handled axe used for splitting firewood and the like.

7. An att, or needle.

8. A yaysit, a strainer, or water dipper, an apparatus for filtering the water which he drinks, so that he may not, even unwittingly, take animal life.

To these parehk-kaya shit-ba, these sacred eight utensils, is usually added an awana or yap, a lotus-leaf-shaped fan, made from a single palm frond, with an edging of bamboo or light wood, and furnished with a handle fashioned like the letter S. The leaf used is that of the Talapat palm, hence the name of Talapoins given to the members of the brotherhood by the early Portuguese adventurers in Burma. Every mendicant must have this fan with him when he goes to an assemblage where there are likely to be women present, in order that he may be thus able to shut himself off from any temptation to carnal thoughts. The sight of half a dozen or more solemn-visaged monks sitting on their mats and coyly hiding their faces behind these big fans is apt to raise a smile on the face of a foreigner. But there is no doubt that the regulation is well advised. Women are disturbers of tranquil meditation.

When these necessaries have been provided, the candidate proceeds to the appointed building. This is always a thehn,

a consecrated hall, built of teak, with open sides and the sacred three, five, or seven overlapping and diminishing roofs, not unlike the Albert Memorial in appearance, but much larger at the base. Here the examining body is assembled to the number of ten or twelve, ordinarily, but a minimum of four will suffice if the ceremony is conducted in the jungle. The senior is appointed oopit-see, or president, and a secretary is nominated, whose duty it is to bring forward the candidate and to read the Kammawahsah, the ritual of ordination. This is the most gorgeously ornamented of all the Burmese books. It is written, not in the ordinary round character, but in square letters painted on with a thick black resinous gum, and requires a special education to read it. The leaves are formed either of the ordinary palm-leaf, thickly covered with red lacquer, and profusely ornamented round the border and between the lines with gilded figures of nats and elaborate scroll-work, or in the case of the more sacred monasteries, of the king's discarded pasohs. None may wear these waistcloths after the Great King of Righteousness has tired of them, and many are therefore made use of for this purpose. Portions of them are taken, doubled over, and then covered with numerous coatings of wood-oil and a paste composed of this same thi'-see, with finely sifted burnt rice-husks, sawdust, and rice-water, until at last they become firm as a piece of cardboard, but vastly more pliant. Then the sheets are emblazoned, and the text painted on, the whole being enclosed between richly illuminated teak boards. Few more splendid-looking manuscripts can be seen anywhere. Occasionally copies are found engrossed on thin sheets of ivory or copper, but those on the royal pasohs, called Woo'lè Kammawahsahs are most highly esteemed. The text is always read in a peculiar way, in a high-pitched, jerky recitative, which is not without a certain impressive effect.

The following detailed account of the ceremony of initiation is taken from the second volume of Bishop Bigandet's *Life of Gautama*, the bulk of it being a translation of the Kammawahsah :—

As soon as the pyin-sin have taken their places, the

Kammawah-sayah (the secretary) introduces the novitiant duly clothed and bearing the necessary utensils. The candidate kneels down, and, with his hands raised to his forehead and his body bent, repeats three times:

"Venerable president, I acknowledge you to be my oopit-see."

The assistant addressing himself to the candidate, says:

"Dost thou acknowledge this to be thy father, and these thy sacred vestments?"

The candidate audibly answers, "Yes," and then withdraws to a distance of twelve cubits from the assembled fathers, whom the Kammawah-sayah addresses as follows:

"Venerable oopit-see, and you, brethren, here assembled, listen to my words. The candidate who now stands in a humble posture before you solicits from the oopit-see the favour of being honoured with the dignity of pyin-sin. If it appears to you that everything is properly arranged and disposed for this purpose, I will duly admonish him."

Then turning to the candidate he says:

"O candidate, be attentive to my words, and beware lest on this solemn occasion thou utterest an untruth, or concealest aught from our knowledge. Learn that there are certain incapacities and defects which render a person unfit for admission into our order. Moreover, when before the assembly thou art interrogated respecting such defects, thou art to answer truly and declare what incapacities thou mayest labour under. Now this is not the time to remain silent and decline thy head; every member of the assembly has a right to interrogate thee at his pleasure, and it is thy bounden duty to return an answer to all his questions.

"Candidate! Art thou affected with leprosy or any such odious malady? Hast thou scrofula or any similar complaint? Dost thou suffer from asthma or cough? Art thou affected with those complaints which arise from a corrupted blood? Art thou afflicted by madness or other ills caused by giants, witches, or the evil spirits of the forests or mountains?"

To each question the candidate answers—

"From such complaints and bodily disorders I am free."

The examination continues:

"Art thou a man?"

"I am."

"Art thou a true and legitimate son?"

"I am."

"Art thou involved in debts?"

"I am not."

"Art thou the bondman and underling of some great man?"

"I am not."

"Have thy parents given their consent to thy ordination?"

"They have."

"Hast thou reached the age of twenty years?"

"I have."

"Are thy vestments and sacred begging-bowl prepared?"

"They are."

"Candidate, what is thy name?"

"Wago (a vile and unworthy being)."

"What is the name of thy master?"

"His name is oopit-see."

The assistant then turns to the assembled yahans and says:

"Venerable oopit-see, and ye assembled brethren, be pleased to listen to my words. I have duly admonished this candidate who seeks from you admission to our order. Does the present moment appear to you a meet and a fit one for his admission? If so, I will order him to approach."

The fathers remaining silent, the assistant instructs the postulant to go close to the assembly and to ask that he may be received. The candidate approaches the assembly, and sitting before them in a respectful attitude, resting on his heels, raises his joined hands and says three times, "I beg, O fathers of this assembly, to be admitted as yahan. Have pity on me, take me from my present state of a layman, which is one of sin and imperfection, advance me to that of yahan, which is one of virtue and perfection."

The assistant then addresses the council and says:

"O ye fathers here assembled, hear my words. This candidate, humbly prostrated before you, begs of the oopit-see to be admitted among us; he is free from all defects, corporeal infirmities, and mental incapacities that would

otherwise debar him from entering our holy state; he is provided with the patta and holy vestments, and he has duly asked the assembly in the name of the oopit-see for permission to be admitted. Now, therefore, let the assembled fathers complete his ordination. To whomsoever this seems good let him keep silence; whosoever thinks otherwise, let him declare that the candidate is unworthy of admission."

This he repeats thrice, and then continues:

"Since then none of the fathers object, but all are silent, which is a sign that all have consented, so therefore let it be done. Let this candidate pass out of the state of sin and imperfection into the perfect state of a yahan, and thus, by the consent of the oopit-see and all the fathers, let him be received."

The fathers must note down under what shade, on what day, at what hour, and in what season the candidate has been received.

The reader of the Kammawah, addressing the candidate, continues:

"Let the candidate attend to the following account of the duties which are incumbent upon him, and to the faults which he must carefully avoid:—

"It is the duty of each member of our brotherhood to beg for his food with labour and with the exertion of the muscles of his feet, and through the whole course of his life he must gain his subsistence by the labour of his feet (he must not work with his hands, nor beg with his tongue). He is allowed to make use of all things that are offered to him in particular, or to the society in general, that are usually presented in banquets, that are sent by letter, and that are given on the new and full moon and at festivals. O candidate, all these things you may use for your food."

*Candidate.* "Sir, I understand what you tell me."

"It is a part of the duty of a member of our society to wear, through humility, yellow clothes made of rags thrown about in the streets or among the tombs. If, however, by his talent and virtue, one procures for himself many benefactors, he may receive from them for his habit the following articles, namely, cotton and silk, or cloth of red (of a Thibetan origin) or yellow wool."

*Candidate.* "As I am instructed so will I perform."

"Every member of the society must dwell in a house built under the shade of lofty trees. But if, owing to your zeal and virtue, you procure for yourself many benefactors who are willing to build for you a better habitation, you may dwell in it. The dwelling may be made of bamboo, wood, or bricks, with roofs adorned with spires of pyramidal or triangular form."

*Candidate.* "I will duly attend to these instructions."

"It is incumbent upon an elect to use as medicine the urine of a cow or of a black bullock, whereon lime and the juice of a lemon or other sour fruit has been poured. He may also use as medicines articles thrown out of markets, or picked up at the corners of streets. He may accept for medicinal purposes nutmegs or cloves. The following articles also may be used medicinally—butter, cream, and honey."

*Candidate.* "As I am instructed so will I perform."

The newly initiated yahan is now warned against the four sins, the commission of any one of which would entail the loss of the dignity he has just attained.

The Kammawah-sayah goes on: "Elect, being now admitted into our society, it is no longer lawful for you to indulge in carnal pleasures, whether with yourself or with animals. He who is guilty of such a sin can no longer be numbered among the perfect. Sooner shall the severed head be joined again to the neck, and life restored to the breathless body, than a pyin-sin who has committed fornication recover his lost sanctity. Beware therefore lest you pollute yourself with such a crime."

*Candidate.* "As I am instructed so will I perform."

"Again, it is unlawful and forbidden for an elect to take things that belong to another, or even to covet them, although their value should not exceed a quarter of a tical (about six annas). Whoever sins even to that small amount is thereby deprived of his sacred character, and can no more be restored to his pristine state than the branch cut from the tree can retain its luxuriant foliage and put forth buds. Beware of theft during the whole of your mortal journey."

*Candidate.* "As I am instructed so will I perform."

"Again, an elect can never knowingly deprive any living being of life, or wish the death of any one, however troublesome he may prove. Sooner shall the cleft rock reunite so as to make a whole, than he who kills any being be readmitted into the society. Cautiously avoid so heinous a crime."

*Candidate.* "As I am instructed so will I perform."

"Again, no member of our brotherhood can ever arrogate to himself extraordinary gifts or supernatural perfections, or through vainglory give himself out as a holy man; such, for instance, as to withdraw into solitary places, or on pretence of enjoying ecstasies like the areeya, afterwards presume to teach others the way to uncommon spiritual attainments. Sooner the lofty palm-tree that has been cut down can become green again, than an elect guilty of such pride be restored to his holy station. Take care that you do not give way to such an excess."

*Candidate.* "As I am instructed so will I perform."

(The pyin-sin who commits any one of these last four sins is *ipso facto* excluded from the society. Nothing can palliate them. Other sins may be atoned for by penance and repentance, but one who has committed any one of these crimes may indeed, if undetected, remain a member of the order, but inwardly he no longer belongs to it. He has become a living lie.)

These denunciations end the ceremony. The newly made yahan falls in with the rest, and on the rising of the council proceeds, in company with them, to his own monastery. It is thus clearly seen that the mendicant receives no spiritual powers whatever. He simply becomes a member of a holy society that he himself may observe the laws of the Master more perfectly. He has nothing to do with guiding his fellow monks or the laity. The latter indeed may gain for themselves easy merit by pressing alms upon him, but that can hardly be said to be a merit in the pyin-sin. They may also go and consult him, and he will read portions of the Law, and explain them as far as his learning permits. He occasionally reads the Law aloud in a rest-house near the pagoda on a feast day; goes to a funeral, that

the pious may have an opportunity of giving him presents, and so laying up a good store towards the kan of a future existence. But it is the teaching of the youth of the country that is his chief credit, and it is this that binds the country to the support of the monastic system.

Sometimes after the ritual of the Kammawah has been gone through, the sponsor of the elected pyin-sin stands up and reads a selection from the full rule of the order, which contains 227 precepts. This is called the Pateemouk, or Book of the Enfranchisement, and its composition is attributed to the Lord Buddha himself; but it is much more probably, indeed certainly, like the Kammawahsah, the slow growth and production of a long series of observant apostles. Every possible action of the pyin-sin during the day is anticipated, and the precise way in which it should be performed carefully set forth. The sins he may commit are divided under seven main heads, of which the first, called Pahrahzeekan, comprises the four cardinal sins mentioned above. The others may be atoned for by confession to the kyoung-pohgoh or sayah, who appoints a penance or not as he thinks fit. The punishments are not severe in character, and are usually to water the sacred trees, to sweep out the rooms, to walk for a stated time in the heat of the sun, to carry a number of baskets of earth from one place to another, to sleep without a pillow, or to keep a vigil by night in a churchyard. But a series of infractions of the law would meet with very severe treatment, if not from the heads of the monastery, then from the mass of the people outside. If a pyin-sin committed any one of the four cardinal sins, he would most assuredly be unfrocked and turned out of the monastery doors to the mercy of the people, and they would certainly stone him, and, in Upper Burma, probably put him to death. Such lapses, and even the commission of more venial offences, are very rare, for the weak-minded yahan is always free to turn layman whenever he chooses, without consulting any one but himself and his frailties.

The ceremony of excommunication, thabeht hmouk (literally, inverting the alms-bowl), is sufficiently solemn. The monks gather in a circle round the culprit, and the latter part of the Kammawah, that which is read to drive

sickness and evil spirits out of a town, is gravely recited by the abbot, the surrounding brethren responding at the end of each sentence. When it is finished, his yellow robes are taken off him, his alms-bowl is turned mouth downwards, and he is hurried out of the monastery limits. His condition is pitiable. No one may speak to him; no monk will take alms from him; he can neither buy nor sell; he is not allowed even to draw water from a well, or drink from the jars at a wayside zayat. He is as much an outcast as any pagoda slave, and grievous is the penance he must go through before he is once more received into the society even of laymen. It occasionally happens that when there is much evil living in a district, or if the people are lax in their religious observances, that the brethren of the kyoung put the neighbourhood under a ban by inverting their alms-bowls, and refusing to go out begging. There is no greater proof of the power of the assembly than the rapidity with which this effects its purpose. The most careless are brought to a sense of their sinfulness in a few days.

Before the death of the Lord Buddha, the yahans all addressed one another as awoothaw; but after he had attained the neh'ban of khan-das under the eng-gyin-bin (*Shorea robusta*), a recognition of relative rank was instituted. The inferiors, we are told, called the more advanced in the order, banteh, while the juniors were addressed in their turn, by their proper name, or that of their family. In Burma, however, this regulation prevails only to a very slight extent. With the mendicants, as with the royal family, and indeed with the populace at large, it is considered uncivil to mention a person's name in conversation, and his rank, or the kyoung he belongs to, is used instead, or perhaps only the designation of his sacred profession. The laity indiscriminately address all wearers of the yellow robe as payah (lord).

Similarly the "punishment of Brahma," recommended by the great master to be employed against weaker brethren, is little used. This punishment was calculated to isolate the offending brother. The other yahans were to avoid speaking to him, to the extent of not even uttering a rebuke, if he indulged in indiscreet talk. Nowadays, when one pyin-sin is irritated with another, he does not indeed talk to him, or

go and abuse him, but he advises the people to have nothing to do with him, and give him no alms.

Indeed many laxities have crept in. Some casuists evade the rule against touching gold and silver. It is becoming lamentably common for monks, otherwise eminently pious and worthy of respect, not only not to refuse money, but actually to receive it with their own hands—covered with a handkerchief. Such unprincipled playing with the letter of the law is vehemently denounced by the Soola-gandees, and disliked by the more earnest laymen, even when the pyin-sin does not personally shave so close to the wind, but bids one of his schoolboys take the coin and put it in the box. Of a piece with this is the roundabout way of getting anything the monk may especially desire. He may not directly ask for anything, if it were even food to save him from starvation, far less must he bargain for the object he wishes. Therefore an elaborate method of exchange has been invented by a yahan in whom the passion of covetousness was far from being extinguished. He says, such and such a thing "is useless to me; but what is the value of that? I have begging-bowls, iron, clay, and lacquer in abundance, but my robe is sadly worn and discoloured. That thengan is seemly and suitable for a holy man. Thrice blessed is he that giveth alms, his merit will wax great." Very often he thus gets the thing he wants without having to part with previous alms-gifts. Others, perhaps, a little more scrupulous, mention to the kappeeyadayaka, the manciple of the kyoung, that they would be glad to have such and such a thing, and he provides it out of the monastic funds. All this trifling with the spirit of the pateemouk is however strenuously denounced by the Soola-gandee, who in Lower Burma have gathered a large proportion of the more right-thinking of the laity to their side.

Some of the regulations of the Book of the Enfranchisement are very singular, but all may be traced to some one of the fundamental precepts, and are not so ludicrous as some unbelievers would make out, except for the fact that they are set down so precisely when they might have been left to the imagination.

A monk must not build a monastery for himself without

the aid of a benefactor. If his piety and talents are not such as to induce a layman to build a kyoung for him, let him patiently remain in the house into which he was ordained. He must see that the foundations of a monastery are not laid in a place where there are many insects or worms, which would thus be killed.

For a similar reason he must not dig himself, except in a sandy place, where there can be no animal life. Neither must he spit, nor do anything of that kind on green grass, nor in fresh water, nor is he allowed to climb trees. There was a discussion in the Lord Buddha's time as to whether vegetation could be regarded as anywhere in the ladder of existence. Shin Gautama, on being asked, said they could not. Still trees and grass must not be destroyed, for they support life in other creatures. A yahan may not drive in a carriage or ride a pony. He must not travel in the same boat, or remain under the same roof with a woman, or even with a female animal. When he walks abroad he must neither walk fast nor dawdle and lounge about the streets. He must allow no woman to wash or clean his robes, nor eat food cooked by female hands, if he can get any other; if a woman offers rice in her hand, he may take but not eat it. He must not look into a brother's thabeht, as suggesting that he does not receive much alms. He must not eat his food to the last mouthful, and must avoid highly-seasoned dishes as tending to heat the blood.

In return for their self-denial the pyin-sin are bountifully honoured by the people, from the sovereign on the throne, who vacates his seat for the thah-thana-being, to the beggar in the street who prostrates himself in the dust when the yahan passes by. In Upper Burma all make obeisance when the mendicant passes, and the women kneel down on each side of the road. In Lower Burma such outward marks of respect are not usual in the larger towns, but there is no lack of veneration, and all make way for him when he walks abroad. The oldest layman assumes the title of disciple to the last inducted pyin-sin, and, with clasped hands, addresses him as payah, the highest title the language affords. The monk's commonest actions, walking, eating, sleeping, are referred to in honorific language, different from that which

would be used of a layman, or even of the king, performing the same thing. The highest officials bow down before them, and impose upon themselves the greatest sacrifices, both of time and money, to build splendid kyoungs for them, and minister to their wants. Finally, the monk's person is sacred and inviolable. Nothing he does can subject him to the civil law. He bears the title of Thageewin Mintha, Thageewin Prince, as the heir of the scion of Kapilawoot, and receiver of his inheritance.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE MONASTERIES

OUTSIDE every village in Burma, no matter how small, there stands a pohn-gyee kyoung. There may have been no one wealthy enough, or zealous enough, to build a pagoda, or the proximity of some ancient and eminently famous shrine may have rendered unnecessary a general subscription for such a purpose, but there is always a building for the mendicants. Away from the noise of the people—for the monastery must not have secular houses near it—surrounded by great, well-foliaged trees, tamarinds, mangoes, jacks, cocoa-nut, and areca, and palmyra palms, sahl trees, and the tha-byay-bin, to shield them from the heat and supply them with fruit, the monks' position is well calculated to attract those who are tired of the tumult and bickerings and sorrows of the world. There the pyin-sin pass their time without a care to ruffle the tranquil current of their lives; without trouble as to their food, for a pious and kindly population supplies them far beyond their wants; with no irksome duties, for nothing is required of them in return; with no care but how to get through the day with as little trouble and ennui as possible; seeking nothing but the fulfilment of the Law, and the path to eventual deliverance from the misery of ever-recurring existences; no wonder many novices come to like the ways of the religious house and yearly swell the ranks of the order, so that there are no signs, two thousand five hundred years after the founding of the religion, of any weakening of its strength.

The first behkkoos dwelt under the shade of the forest trees, or perhaps in small huts erected there to shelter them

from the pitiless sun and the raging of the storms. This is the explanation of the circumstance that every Budh is specially connected with some tree, as Shin Gautama with the bawdee-bin, the banyan, under which he attained his full dignity, and the eng-gyin-bin, the *Shorea robusta*, under which he was born and died, and, as we are told, the last Budh of this world cycle, Areemadehya, will receive his Buddhaship under the *Mesua ferrea*. Hence the regard for trees which the Burmans share with so many other nations, ancient and modern, and the fact that a clump of palmyras and tamarinds seen in the distance infallibly suggests a monastery. It is not to be supposed, however, that it was the intention of the Lord Buddha that the sacred order should remain far away from mankind in lonesome huts in the depths of the forest. Very early in his teaching, kings, nobles, and wealthy men vied with one another in erecting spacious and magnificent dwellings for himself and his disciples. Most noted among these were the Zaytawoon Monastery, built by the rich man Anahtabehn, within which the celebrated Mingala Thoht sermon was preached by the Buddha to a pious-minded dewah; the Pohppayohn Kyoung and that of Wehloowoon built by the wealthy dame Weethaka and King Bimbathara of Radzagio, to both of which Shin Gautama frequently retired to spend the rainy season of Lent. These were all magnificently adorned; and it is expressly mentioned that the pious need spare themselves no expense in constructing and adorning such religious buildings, though the inhabitant of the most gorgeous of them dresses in no way different from the humblest anchorite, and has no more costly utensils.

Ordinarily the monastery is built of teak, though in many places, both in Mandalay and Lower Burma, brick buildings are being erected, notwithstanding the prejudice that exists against them from their greater liability to damage in the case of earthquakes. The shape is always oblong, and the inhabited portion is raised on posts or pillars, some eight or ten feet above the ground. They are, like all the other houses in the country, never more than one story high; for if it is an indignity to a layman to have any one over his head, it is much more so to a member of the brotherhood. The space between the ground and the floor

of the kyoung is always kept open and is never used except by the school-boys, who have not arrived at notions of personal dignity, and find the locality retired and convenient for games at gohn-nyin-toh, and the discussion of forbidden eatables, or subjects of conversation. There are always a few pariah dogs there too, dozing off the surfeit of food they have had from the morning begging-pots, or the offerings at the pagoda. A flight of steps of stone or wood leads up to the verandah, which extends all along the north and south sides, and frequently all round the building. If the steps are of stone, or rather brickwork covered with plaster, they are usually adorned at the foot by propylæa in the shape of two beeloos, or a couple of manoht-theeha—curious creatures, half man half lion—usually bold enough in conception if somewhat rough in execution. Tiers of trefoil heads usually characterise the parapets when they are of mason-work. When the ladder is of wood it is covered with spirited carving in deep relief, representing nats and ogres, dancing figures and grim warriors, with abundant scroll-work as everywhere else throughout the building.

From the raised floor thus reached, rises the building, with tier upon tier of dark massive roofs, giving the appearance of many stories when there is actually but one, for the reason already mentioned. This style of roofing is allowed only for religious buildings, for the royal palaces, and for the houses of a few high officials who acquire the honour by special patent, and with whom the form and number of roofs is a matter of regulation settled by the sumptuary laws. This spire-like style of roof is called pyathat, and properly there are but three kinds: with three super-imposed roofs called yahma, with five roofs called thooba, and with seven, as the royal palace and the most sacred kyoungs, called thooyahma. The ends of the gables are adorned with pinnacles or finials, each with a curious wooden flag at the top and crowned with a htee, gilt and furnished with bells, copper, silver, or gold, the whole being elaborately carved.[1]

[1] The triple, quintuple, and septuple roofs of the monastic houses, with their elaborate adornments, there is little doubt found their origin in the opportunity which wood gave for the development of ornament in the way of carving. If the wooden monasteries are compared with the strikingly similar wooden churches in

The kyoung accommodation is very simple. It consists in the main of a great central hall divided into two portions, one level with the verandah where the scholars are taught, and most of the duties of the monastery carried on, and the other a raised dais, two feet or so above the level of the rest of the building. Seated upon this the yahans are accustomed to receive visitors, and at the back, against the wall, are arranged the images of Buddha, a large one usually standing in the centre on a kind of altar with candles, flowers, praying flags, and other offerings placed before it, and on shelves alongside a number of smaller figures of gold, silver, alabaster, clay or wood, according to the popularity of the kyoung and the faith of the neighbourhood. Close by are placed also the manuscript chests, sadeiks, small shrines, models in wood of monasteries and pagodas, the fans and other religious implements of the pyin-sin and the gifts of the pious, heaped together ordinarily in very careless fashion. The central image is almost invariably placed on the eastern side of the building. There are occasionally dormitories for the monks, but as a rule they sleep in the central hall, where the mats which form their beds may be seen rolled up round the pillow against the wall. In many monasteries there is a special room for the palm-leaf scribes, often detached from the main building, as are the cook-room and the bathing-houses.

The whole area of the extensive compound in which the monastery stands is enclosed by a heavy teak fence with massive squared posts and rails, seven or eight feet high. All within this parawoon is sacred ground, and the laity, when they enter, take off their shoes and carry them in their hands. This rule applies to the highest in the land, and when a prince or a min-gyee arrives on his elephant, he must dismount at the monastery gate, and come in reverently barefooted. Within the one encircling fence there may be, and usually are, quite a number of separate buildings like that described, with their ecclesiastical roofs towering up,

Norway—at Hitterdal, for example, or Borgund—we have a proof that nature, under like circumstances, always produces like results from human ingenuity. It may be added that the simple tumulus, which was the original idea of the bell-pagoda, is also found in the Scandinavian *haug*.

dark, or glittering with gold-leaf among the bright green foliage of the peepul and tamarind trees. Each house has a prior or superior, with his two or three brethren, and a certain number of probationers and scholars, and in the central building dwells the geing-ohk, or sadaw. In a corner of the compound, or just outside, there is almost always a thehn, a building for the performance of various rites and ceremonies, more particularly for the examination and ordination of yahans. The ground on which these stand is not only holy now, but has always been so since the Lord Buddha first preached the Law. When a new thehn is to be built, it is usually found possible to exhume the remains of an old building of the same kind, thus proving the immemorial sanctity of the site. Otherwise the ground is dedicated to religion by the king in perpetuity. This consecration of the ground is, however, rare in these latter times, though several times, in Lower Burma, the British Government has been asked to make a formal grant of land, to be used for religious purposes. Not far from Rangoon, in the neighbourhood of the Kyeik-ka-san pagoda, there is a thehn-gyee, regarded as particularly holy, from the tradition that it is built over the remains of one of the yahanda, who brought the remains of Shin Gautama to Rangoon. Within the monastery precincts are usually, also, one or two tasoungs, highly ornamented tectums, erected over an image of the Buddha. Very many zealous priors put up marble stones, or finger-posts, at certain points beyond the Parawoon, with inscriptions on them to the effect that Oo Adehsa's, or Pyinyazawta's monastery is to the westward, or southward, and you must not kill animals, or conduct yourself in an unseemly manner near it. It is the ignoring or the ignorance of this injunction which has brought many sporting Englishmen into trouble, and led them to believe that the yahans condemn shooting altogether, and lay themselves out to thwart it; whereas the intention is only to avoid witnessing, if possible, what they regard as a flagrant sin, and especially to protect the pigeons, which usually flock about the monastic trees. Not many people in England would think of going to shoot in a churchyard.

The majority of kyoungs in the jungle and in Lower Burma are plain teak wood, or brick and lime structures,

with more or less ornate carving and moulding, and interior decorations; but to see the really gorgeous ecclesiastical buildings one must journey to Mandalay. There the Kyoung-daw-gyee, the Royal Monastery, is the most striking collection of edifices of their kind to be seen in the world. At the foot of Mandalay Hill, just outside the eastern gate of the city, it extends over an area of a good many acres. Every building in it is magnificent; every inch carved with the ingenuity of a Chinese toy; the whole ablaze with gold-leaf and a mosaic of fragments of looking-glass, embedded in a resinous gum, while the zinc roofs glisten like silver in the sun, and the golden bells on the gable spires tinkle melodiously with every breeze. The huge posts are gilt all over, or covered with a red lacquer; the eaves and gables represent all kinds of fantastic and grotesque figures. The interior is no less elaborate, the panels of wall and ceiling are some carved, some diapered with the mosaic mirror work, glistening like silver with a rough gold network thrown over it. The wood-carving is particularly fine; the effect in some places, where the birds, pecking, taking wing, alighting, and in every other variety of attitude, are so cut as to appear to underlie the profuse flower scroll-work, being particularly clever. The amount of gilding, spread thickly over every part of the kyoung, alone represents many hundred pounds. Singular from its plain unadorned appearance is the high, brown teak-wood tower in one corner, to which the Sadaw-gyee and his monks occasionally withdraw, to devote themselves to contemplation and the task of learning to know themselves and the khandas, as well as the Seht and the Sehdathit. For this withdrawal from their gorgeous surroundings, to indulge in abstract thought, they have the example and precept of the Lord Buddha himself, who, even when he reposed as a babe on the bosom of his aunt Gautamee, gave himself over to contemplation.

The whole of the flat land between Mandalay Hill and the city walls is covered with monasteries, each of them standing separate and enclosed within its own parawoon, and almost all presided over by a sadaw, a monk of the highest rank. They are thus entirely independent of each other. One of the most interesting for Englishmen is the Theehoh

Teik, the "Ceylon Monastery," presided over by Lingayah-mah, a sadaw who was in great favour with Mindohn Min, the late king. The term teik is always applied to a "bishop's monastery," as implying that his is the chief of a number of kyoungs, all under his care, and in which he makes occasional sojourns. The Theehoh Teik is peculiar for its trim appearance. It is very new; the under part of all the buildings is of brick; the compound is kept scrupulously clean; there is not a single large tree in it, and the parawoon is a neat sawn-wood fence, instead of being, as is the case almost everywhere else, composed simply of huge stems of trees placed side by side in the ground. The sadaw himself is a very enlightened man. He has been several times to Rangoon to worship at the Great Pagoda, and to decide on questions in dispute. He has, in his library, copies of the English Scriptures in the Burmese version of Judson, and has read them through. Numbers of American Baptists' tracts, and the sacred books of other religions, have also a place in his manuscript chests. These are all deposited in a separate building standing in the middle of the enclosure, and used for no other purpose, except that the scribes sit here making copies of borrowed MSS., or setting down notes of the learned bishop himself. The palm-leaf book is still universal, and the work of making up a volume is therefore very laborious; for the most practised manipulator cannot, with his agate style and light strip of palmyra-leaf, exceed the speed of an English boy who has just got over the preliminary difficulties of pot-hooks and hangers. The letters scratched on are made more distinct by the application of crude earth-oil. This serves to darken the writing, as well as to preserve the leaf. The regular scribes are always laymen, and it is a matter of very considerable unpleasantness to the cenobites, that the cleverest of them are very often uncommonly bad livers, spending all their gains in libations of "Old Tom," or little balls of opium. These vagaries are, however, frequently winked at, for a copyist who can write neatly and with accuracy is far from being common.

The Theehoh Teik library is a model in its way. It is nearly the best monastic collection in Mandalay, and is certainly far better arranged than any other. The sadeiks,

or manuscript boxes, are arranged in three rows, one over the other; the thohts and zahts—the sermons and birth-stories — of the Lord Buddha below; above them the Cinghalese commentaries and exegeses; and on the top shelf Burmese translations and the explanations of various learned sadaws. Each chest contains a large number of different books, each separate collection of leaves being enclosed between wooden boards, some plain, some carved in high relief, with figures of dewas and demons. Round this is wrapped a kabalway, a square piece of cloth with inwoven scenes from the sacred books, or portions of the Law, and the formulæ used at the pagoda. Most of these are of silk, very often with narrow slips of bamboo worked in so as to give stiffness to the whole. Instead of this, or sometimes in addition, is used, the sah-see-gyoh, a riband, about two fingers' breadth, and upwards of a yard in length. This is knitted or crocheted in a peculiarly close fashion, which puzzles English ladies, and which I am not milliner enough to be able to describe. On it is worked the name of the owner, his titles and distinctions, and whatever other aspirations he chooses to add. They are very neat, and quite easy to read, an advantage which does not always characterise Berlin wool work. The king's grants of forest land, monopolies, and the like, were usually executed in this way.

All the boxes are kept carefully locked, and the door is barred at night, for such a library represents years of labour, and could only with the greatest difficulty be replaced. It is only in Mandalay that libraries of any value are to be found. In Lower Burma the majority of the kyoungs do not even possess a complete copy of the three parts of the Beetaghat, the Buddhist Bible, and some few have nothing beyond a copy of the Kammawahsah, and perhaps a Malla Lingaya Woottoo, a life of the Lord Buddha, or something of the kind. Many others have, no doubt, valuable collections, but the monks are ignorant, they cannot read the books themselves, and they do not care to exhibit them to those who can. Consequently, they moulder away in the bottom of the sadeik, crushed away into the darkest corner of the main room of the monastery. It is, perhaps, not surprising that the most learned monks do not belong to the large

towns, but come from remote kyoungs in the depths of the jungle. This is true also of Upper Burma, for though the sadaws in Mandalay are the most learned in the country, they have acquired their reputation in jungle monasteries, and have only been summoned to the royal city when their fame has spread over the land, and the title of royal teacher has been conferred on them.

The main room of Lingayahmah's Monastery contains a great number of curiosities collected by the Burmese Embassies on their travels through Europe. Most of these were presented by the Kin Woon-gyee, the head of the mission, and are in many ways most interesting. Prominent is a large photograph album, emblazoned with the Italian royal arms and containing a fine collection of views. Another album is filled with cartes of members of the Embassy, notably of the lamented Naingan-gyaw Woon-douk, the portly and good-natured "Pio Nono" of the *Daily News*, who seems never to have missed being photographed wherever he went, and figures in every style, from the penny smudge, apparently taken on a country race-course or outside Battersea Park, to the coloured and gilt grandeur of a Neapolitan cabinet. The author of the "Encyclopædia of Burmese Literature" had no notion of changing the expression of his face, however. He looks stolidly like just having had his dinner in every impression, and the multiplication of photographs serves principally as a means of comparing different styles of art, and exhibiting the great stock of clothing which the worthy Woon-douk carried about with him.

In addition to the photographs, there is a great collection of engravings, some of them very valuable; and mixed up with these are to be found some very queer items—old hotel bills, advertisements of gigantic hosiery establishments, with pictures of the same at the top, circus play-bills, shilling view guides, some sheets of the *Graphic*, the front page of the wrapper of *Punch*, and a few railway tickets. These are all carefully preserved, along with many other gifts of the home-keeping pious; rolls of yellow cloth, Dutch clocks, betel-nut boxes, spare spittoons, and begging-pots, rugs, and pots of honey. The images of the kyoung, contrary to the usual custom, are placed in a glass case in the centre of the

room, instead of at the east end. This situation is due to their value, most of them being of silver or gold, and one or two studded with precious stones.

The Theehoh Teik is certainly one of the neatest and most methodically arranged communities in the country, but there are many more gorgeously decorated, and still more that are larger. The biggest in Burma was probably the Mahah Yatana Poung-daw, which stood near the great Arrakan Pagoda in the suburbs of Mandalay, and was in great part burnt down in 1879. The building, with its encircling platform, measured 440 feet by 200, and was supported by 404 massive teak trees, none less than two feet in diameter, and the central posts, which upheld the topmost tier of roof, must have been quite eighty feet in height. Near Maulmein, in Lower Burma, there is another kyoung remarkable for the huge girth of its posts.

The brick monasteries are commonest in the neighbourhood of Mandalay and other old capitals. They are covered with chunam, and in place of having a spire, are themselves built in the form of a pya-that, rising in the shape of rectangular terraces to a considerable height. Round the central hall, which is often divided by a gilt railing across the centre, are a number of cloisters and corridors, which ensure a perpetual cool breeze. Many of these monasteries are adorned with fresco paintings in the hall and in the honeycomb of corridors, representing usually scenes from the Zahts, passages in the life of Shin Gautama, an especially favourite one being the Jataka of Naymee, where the pious prince is represented as a white ghostly figure in a chariot, passing, like the *pius Æneas*, through the dismal abodes of hell and the six heavens of the nats. Some other representations portray the occupations of daily life, such as feasting, hunting, weaving, and the different nationalities to be seen in the country. A very common scene shows the punishment which awaits fishermen in the next existence. The miserable destroyer of animal life is represented as dangling by the tongue on a fish-hook, while demons jerk him into the air, and drop him back into a lake of burning pitch. Many of them have inscriptions below to explain the subject of the picture. Thus in Pagahn :—

"When King Nay-bin Min-gyee reigned in Maytheela over the ten governors, according to the old books, the Thagyah Min came from the nat heavens to help him."

"In the Monastery Yatana Shway-deing, our Lord preached the Pataynohn Tagayoh, and remained several days."

"Shin Thoomayda (Gautama), in the land of Thoodawdana, received the Buddhaship under the banyan tree."

"Payah Aloung Theidat (the embryo Budh, Prince Siddartha), the King's son, married 4000 charming Yathaymya."

"Our Lord rides on the elephant Nahla Geeree."

And so on in great variety. One also often finds such a notice as this scrawled on the wall: "In order to be prepared and to gain happiness in the seats of men, of nats, and of neh'ban, the rice-pots are set in order, the images are erected, and the paintings on the walls painted."

The monasteries are built, supported, and furnished by the pious, but there are not a few of them that have considerable sums of money laid away, usually under the control of the kappeeya-dayaka, the layman who lives in the kyoung, and provides for the wants of its inmates. A number of the royal fields round about Oungbinlay, where the Burmese army assembled to seek victory before entering on a campaign, were set apart for the use of the Royal monastery at Payah Gyee, and the revenues were kept in a huge money-chest, which was always under the care of a guard of soldiers. Much of the money was devoted to the adornment of the adjacent pagoda. None can be spent on embellishing the monastery itself. That would be as great a sin as if a monk should build one for himself, besides that it would be depriving the populace of much opportunity for gaining merit.

There are a few monasteries of the Pohnnas here and there in the large towns throughout the country. These Brahmin priests were originally brought captives from Munnipur, and have been employed as astrologers ever since, their ranks being occasionally recruited by new arrivals. One of the requests preferred to Colonel Symes on his embassy to Ava in 1796 was that he would persuade the

Governor-General to send a learned Brahmin and his wife to the capital. The race has been maintained tolerably pure, and the Pohnna is readily distinguishable in the streets from the pohn-gyee. The astrologers muster naturally in greatest force in Mandalay, and their monastery there is situated in a magnificent grove of trees south of the town, and close to the cemeteries. Unlike the native religious, they do not raise their houses on posts above the ground, but follow the Indian custom of having the mat-covered earth for their floor. Foreigners are not admitted into their temples, but there is no objection to the images being brought out by a Pohnna for exhibition to his friends. They worship Krishna and twenty-five other deities, but have all but no congregation, few of their faith coming to Mandalay, and those laymen who were carried away at the same time as themselves into captivity having turned to the Buddhist faith.

No yahan is allowed to have a separate monastery built for him until he has spent five full Wahs under the discipline of a prior. These Lents must also be consecutive. According to their seniority in this respect the monks obtain names. Thus a pyin-sin who has spent five years—which of course is implied by the Wah—is called Anootee, and is a fit object for the pious to honour by erecting a special kyoung for him. When he has been ten years in the order he is addressed as Myizza-tee, and those who have remained steadfastly for twenty years, attain to the full honour of Mahah-tee. Such a self-denying man is always sure of a magnificent funeral when he dies.

It is a very good point about the life in the monastery that the great austerities and absurd mortifications of the flesh indulged in by the Brahminical houses find no place with the Buddhists, who reject them as unnecessary and unprofitable. The life of the initiated is one of constant self-denial; all superfluities and luxuries are renounced; all that is calculated to excite the passions is forbidden; but there are no revolting self-inflicted penances such as are regarded as meritorious in themselves by the followers of the Hindu creed. Fasts and penitential deeds are indeed recommended to those living in the world, but that is because such methods

are the best means for weakening the passions, and increasing the power of the spirit as against the flesh. They are not a part of perfection. They are not even on the direct way to the attainment of perfection. That is only to be achieved by meditation, by pondering on the various aspects of the substances and truths in the world. Therefore the pyin-sin do not make any difference, except in the case of the very austere, in the observance of the appointed duty days, during which it is incumbent on the laity to abstain from food up till mid-day. After noontide the yahan never eats. Considerable scandal is sometimes caused by the tricks of sundry of the weaker vessels. They sit all day with their back to the sun, and if in the afternoon they feel hungry, they ask a scholar if it is yet noon. The wily kyoung-thah, thinking to escape a thrashing on the morrow, promptly answers that it is a good way off twelve o'clock yet, and brings wherewithal to solace the hungry religious. The falsehood, or *suppressio veri*, on the part of the scholar is a venial offence at his age, and the yahan escapes sin, for if he breaks the law it is because he was deceived. Again, Englishmen are often puzzled to know, in a country where there are no clocks, how it is that the people know what o'clock it is. The matter is simple enough when the sun is to be seen, for its course is pretty nearly the same all the year round, and the Burman is tolerably skilled in guessing the time from its height or from the length of the shadows thrown. But it is different during the rainy season, when the sun is often not to be seen for weeks at a time. Here, however, so say the yahans, whom it most seriously concerns, a singular dispensation of nature steps in to their aid. The cocks and hens of Buddhist countries are not as the tame villatic fowl of Western lands. I do not refer to their powers of flying, which are sufficiently irritating to hungry life-taking voyagers, but to the fact that the cocks crow at stated hours, four times a day—at sunrise, noon, sundown, and midnight. They thus inform the inmates of the kyoung when they must cease eating for the day, and enable them to obey the provisions of the Pateemouk. This useful acquirement of the Buddhist chanticleer was acquired in a singular way. Sundry books of the Baydin were burnt as containing unlawful cabalistic

teachings. Among these was the Ah-tappana Baydin. When the fire had died out the barn-door flock came and pecked at the ashes, and so assimilated the astronomic lore contained in the book. I never had the opportunity of watching any particular cock to see if he actually did as reported. They fly about so, that for purposes of observation they might just as well be jungle fowl.

Thus even the powers of nature conspire for the well-being of the monks. It has been shown how the laity provide them with food and splendid dwellings. It may be unhesitatingly asserted that the most luscious fruits and the most delicate viands all find their way to the monasteries. A single instance will show to what an extent this is carried. In jungle places, where in the dry season there is often a great dearth of water, one spring is always set apart for the kyoung, because it would be a great sin, as well as being unpleasant for the yahan, to drink water which had been stirred up, and for that reason would be more likely to contain animal life. This reservation often compels the entire village to walk a mile or more for a supply of water, a very serious inconvenience to the easy-going Burman. In order that strangers and passers-by may have no excuse for drinking from the monastic well, a yellow cloth is hung over it from a bush or a post erected for the purpose. Here again a stumbling-block and stone of offence is thrown in the way of the ignorant or unreflecting foreigner.

Everything near the monastery is rendered sacred, not merely when it is enclosed in the parawoon, but as far as the prior may choose to proclaim it. This is especially common in the case of the large tanks or bricked reservoirs which the pious dig in many parts of the country. These are frequently well stocked with fish and turtle, and when the monks declare them sacred, the fish often become wonderfully tame from the abundant food that is brought them by yahans solicitous as to their safety. A regular thing after worship in the Arrakan Pagoda at Mandalay is to go and feed the great turtle in the tank at the back of the cloisters. There are rows of women selling balls of cooked rice, cakes, and other delicacies which the pious buy for the consumption of the sacred reptiles. There was great

consternation when, in March 1879, the tank dried up and many of the huge creatures died before the people could get water enough from the river, brought in chatties and household utensils, to save them from such a sad fate. The circumstance was supposed to be a sign from the nat guardians of the place of their abhorrence and anger at the shedding of the royal blood by King Theebaw in his holocaust of February. But taking further and totally innocent life seemed a rather singular fashion of expressing disapprobation.

The dog-fish of the Theehadaw Monastery, situated on a small island in the middle of the third and lowest defile of the Irrawaddy, are particularly celebrated, and having been referred to by every traveller in Burma, the little kyoung with its stone pagoda (one of the few of that material in the country) has become a regular show-place for all passengers to Bhamaw. The great five-feet-long, gape-mouthed creatures seem to know their bounds, and do not wander farther than half a mile or so from their sanctuary.

But this is far from being such a remarkable case as previous writers have seemed to imply. All monastic tanks have fish more or less tame, according to the good nature and sympathies of the cenobites, and there is, or was, at least one other place on the Irrawaddy where the fish were as domestic as the dog-fish of Theehadaw. This was near the Kyeik-lat pagoda and monastery, on one of the numerous mouths of the great river. I knew the place well years ago, and then there used to be great conflicts between the ill-conditioned, impious fishermen and the monks. The fish were of the species called nga-dan, well known on English breakfast-tables under the name of "butter-fish," and to provide for the unscrupulous appetites of the foreigner, people used to come at night to catch the unsuspecting nga-dan. The yahans had taught the fish to come and be fed when they beat on the bank and cried Tit, tit, tit; and it was easy to bring them up at any time by following this method. The fishermen came about midnight, and stamped on the bank, and when the nga-dan came, promptly whisked them out with a landing net. The scholars and novitiants had to take turn at watching for these marauders, and if any were discovered, the abbot with his entire *posse comitatus* sallied

out to the rescue of his domesticated fish. If the impious life-taker was alone, or if the abbot's was the stronger party, the offenders were incontinently thrashed, and the young ko-yins wielded their cudgels with an energy and knowledge of tender spots which ordinarily made the victim give up his vile practices for the future. If, however, the law-breakers were in force, then the abbot adopted less violent tactics—though it would have gone hard with any hardened sinner who might have ventured to strike a pyin-sin. He simply sat down and preached the Law to them, recited the Ten Precepts, enumerated the horrors of hell, and thus soon choked them off for that occasion at any rate. But the presence and example of the English, and more especially their money, has a very bad effect on weak-minded, unprincipled men. In Upper Burma such a contest between wrong-doers and the upholders of the first of the Five Precepts could never have been prolonged—Theehadaw, where such scandals never occur, is indeed an instance of it; and since the country-side would not rise to the aid of the pyin-sin, they had to adopt other measures to save their friends and enjoy peaceful nights. They persuaded a pious supporter to dig a large tank near the river-bank and to connect it by a narrow ditch with the river. Then they devoted the results of a whole morning's begging to enticing the nga-dan into the tank, beating first at the mouth of their canal and then all along the banks of it, till they had got all safe in the tank, which abutted on the enclosure of the kyoung. But alas! this was done in the rainy season, and when the hot weather came round the water got shallow and warm, and the fish sickened and died; and in order to preserve at least some of them, the survivors had to be taken back to the river again. When I last was at Kyeik-lat, there were still a good number of the tame fish, tame enough to allow you to stroke them and put gold-leaf on their heads, but there were far from being as many as there should have been had the villagers duly observed the teachings of the Buddha. The primeval simplicity of the people is fast fading away in Lower Burma. The travelling Englishman finds no difficulty in either getting people to sell fowls, or others still less hampered by doubts, to wring their necks and cook them.

The monastery sometimes has a name of its own; more frequently it is called by the Pali name of the town or pagoda near which it lies, or by that of its prior. The Thayet-daw Kyoung in Rangoon is so called from the magnificent mango-trees that grow within it. Well known in Upper Burma is the monastery of Oo Sandimah, or the Mingala-san Teik, where the late king received his instruction in the religious texts which he knew so well. The name is usually given by the founder after consultation with the proposed head of the community, and it cannot be said that the consultation results in much originality.

Here and there throughout the country there are a few yatheht, hermits who withdraw into solitude in forests and desert places, and, like the old rathee (from which word of course the Burman term is derived), living on wild fruits and roots and the chance alms of passers-by. But as the rathee were closely connected with the Brahmins, and as the custom is not recommended by the Buddha, nor looked upon with favour by the people, it is not of frequent occurrence. Occasionally a very austere monk buries himself in the solitude of the jungle during the season of Lent, in order the better to devote himself to meditation, but even this is not common. Nevertheless in the rocks above Nyoung Oo, near Pagahn, there are a few cells dug out high up in the cliffs which are always occupied, as any one who has gone out to shoot the rock pigeons which abound there will very speedily find. The yatheht comes down, confiscates the bag, and drives away the sportsman with terrible threats of future punishment. Such caves and holes in the rocks are not uncommon on other parts of the Irrawaddy, wherever the ascetic is able to climb up and finds the stratum soft enough to hack out with his axe and hollow with his finger-nails. There are a few such cells cut in the rocks at the back of Mandalay Hill, and visitors to the sacred spot occasionally come across one of the hermits striding along, wrapped in thought, grasping an iron staff hung with rings, the rattle of which warns the people to get out of the way and not disturb the holy man's meditations. A few go away from human society altogether, just as St. Simon Stylites isolated himself on a pillar, and the old Culdee monks from the north of England

and Scotland wandered off to the snowy wastes of Iceland, there to seek repose and relief from the turmoil of the world.[1]

Mandalay Hill is always occupied, for the spot is particularly sacred. King Mindohn used to send thither daily a hundred fowls which had been bought and saved from death, and the pious gave them plenty to eat. Similar proceedings caused the sneer of Purchas, "For men they hadde not an hospitall that were thus hospitall to fowles"; but this is hardly deserved, at any rate not in Burma. There in every monastery the Kappeeya-dayaka has a stock of money, raised by selling the things given in presents to the monks, which he devotes to giving in charity to the well-deserving sick and to poor travellers, while any one is welcome at all times to shelter and food in the kyoung as long as he conducts himself properly. The yatheht may be looked upon with pious awe for his austerities and mortifications of the flesh, but the ordinary pyin-sin is more favourably regarded. The building of monasteries and the giving of presents to their inmates is a constant strain on the generosity of the people. It is far more difficult to keep the balance of merit on the right side in Burma than in other countries. Almsgiving is a constant and imperative expense, in addition to regular and personal worship at the pagoda. In Thibet wind or water drives the prayer-machines for extinguishing sin, and the goodman acquires merit while he is snoring at night with his wife at his back. In Pekin the practical Chinese are able to calculate exactly what is set down to their credit, by the expedient of having the prayer-wheels turned when necessary by oxen. But nothing of this kind is practicable in Burma. You must pay your devotions in person, and unless you supplement these by almsgiving your prospects towards a next existence are not such as your friends can regard otherwise than with concern. Fortunately the more holy the receiver the greater the merit of the alms. To support one hundred ordinary men is not so much as to feed one yahan, and so on in increasing ratio. The merit of giving one single meal to a Buddha outweighs that of supply-

[1] It is said that the Thaddah, the grammar, was added to the Beetaghat, that the hermits who had withdrawn to the jungle might not destroy the power of the sermons and lauds by mispronunciation.

ing ten million Pyitzega Buddhas with food. Thus the kyoungs are always well furnished, and their advantage in affording education to the children further gives them a hold over the country. It will be long before the number of monasteries decreases in Burma.

# CHAPTER XIV

## SCHISMATICS

THE Buddhist religion is to its adherents the full and entire truth, and has remained almost entirely free from the schisms and dissensions which have sprung up in most other religions, especially in those of Europe, where the progress of science has caused the rise of multitudes of sects. Fully bound by their religion, in the complete sense of the word, are only the worshipper of the fetish whose object of adoration hangs up in his house, or dangles about his neck, and the Buddhist, whose teachers and models of faith rise and fall in flesh and blood before his eyes, vanishing to Neh'ban, there to be freed from all earthly concern, but leaving behind them as a guide to the same last resting-place the sacred World-Law, and at the same time the Assembly of the Perfect, who appear as an incarnation of that Law for the building up of piety among the laity. The yahans have already beaten down the adversaries within them, and, clothed with the yellow robe of transfiguration, exhibit in their persons the glorious results of adherence to the Tayah. Thus the reverence paid to the monks is a kind of spiritual hero-worship in the sense in which Carlyle speaks of it.

The man yet a slave in the bondage of his lusts and passions gazes in admiration on these models, to whom the recognition of earthly vanity gives strength enough to reject all the allurements of the world and to live only for the future. The spirits are always present to the fetish-worshipper, for hideous devils scare him away from every natural object. So the great secret of the existence of the world is ever present to the Buddhist, and while in the political and social

life of the European nations the manifold character of the questions of the day attract and occupy the minds and influence the religious beliefs of the people, the eyes of the Burman Buddhist are uninterruptedly fixed on the dark mysteries which surround his beginning, his end, and every moment of his existence. His religion enters into every action of his life, and its admirable system of morality need fear comparison with none other on earth; while everything else appears but as a matter of detail, or a different method of viewing the same things. He is not at all unwilling to enter into discussion as to what is the true religion: whether only one is the right, whether all have sprung from the same root and have only now assumed different forms, or whether, as the Deity gave to the hand different fingers, so He has given to mankind different paths. But the arguments of the proselytiser have but very little success, while, on the other hand, there is nowadays practically no attempt to gain converts to their own national faith. This is no doubt in great part due to the absence of all ministerial duties in the brethren of the yellow robe, but also to a belief that true faith can only grow up gradually, and cannot be forced on the mind. At the same time there is not a hint of bigotry. In Mandalay all forms of religion were allowed to be carried on without the least semblance of opposition. The solemn voice of the muezzin; the tinkling of the convent-bell, under the cross of Rome; the noisy rites of devil and fire-worshippers; even the ceremonies of the former fierce enemies of Buddhism, the Brahmins—all of these were exercised without the least hindrance, and the processions of the various forms of faith passed one another in the street with the most complete amicability. Even a convert is left unharmed. There may be a sense of wonder and contempt for the man who voluntarily resigns his high hopes as a Buddhist for the probable fallacies of another cult, but there is never any real attempt at oppression.

Heresies, therefore, never originate with the people; any there are come from the monasteries, but even these relate more to matters of discipline and internal regulation than to real points of faith. The yahans are very clever in dispute, and are far from being averse to it. The better educated of them know their ground perfectly well, and are quite able to

take full advantage of the strong points of their position. They rely entirely on the holy books, and these they have at their fingers' ends. It is granted by all that they are, almost without exception, entirely free from intolerance, and are quite unable to comprehend the zeal for conversion. A venerable sadaw in Bhamo came and listened attentively to the Burmese sermon of Dr. Mason, the celebrated American missionary. When it was over he came and complimented him on its depth and grasp, and then suggested that the reverend doctor should go with him to offer up worship before the image of Buddha! The monks do not think, with cynical mockery, that every one should be allowed to go his own way and be blessed after his own fashion; on the contrary, they seek zealously for new truths and explanations of mysteries; but they hold it presumptuous and unwarrantable, in view of the dark secrets which envelop the life of man from its dawning to its close, to set up each his individual opinion with dogmatic certainty as the only true form and the only one that can save. But they take their stand-point on the actual state of things, on the misery and sorrow which is eternally bound up with the nature of the human body as it exists. They devote themselves entirely to preparing the spirit for its delivery, when it will finally rest, raised above every fear of new change, in the harmonious equipoise of Neh'ban. For this last and highest aim no hypotheses have to be assumed. They require no personal deity who would demand a special place in the system of the world, and in a possible danger to the cosmic system might incur the same risk of destruction. They remain entirely within the clearly defined horizon of their limit of vision, and are therefore very difficult to attack in argument.

Nevertheless schisms have arisen from time to time, and exist at the present day, but they have sprung more from revolt against excessive austerity, or corresponding laxity, than from any real difference on doctrinal points. The Lord Buddha had hardly died before one of the most aged of the disciples, Soobhadra, thus addressed the assembled brethren: "Revered ones, cease to mourn. We are now happily released from the rule of the great Sramana; we shall no more be tormented with 'this is allowable' and 'that is not

allowable'; we can now do what we wish, and leave undone what we do not care for." To put an end to this scandal to religion, and fix definitely the bonds of morality, the great disciple, Kathapa, called together, forty-five years after the Buddha's death, in the year 543 B.C., the first great Council, at Raja Greeha, in the country of Magadha. Kathapa himself was president. The Weenee was read by Oopalee, whom Shin Gautama himself had pointed out as the most learned of his followers, and the Dharma by Ananda, the personal attendant and favourite disciple of the Budh. During seven months the various points in dispute were considered from all points, and after rulings had been publicly and authoritatively given, the Council broke up. Thus were the three "baskets of the Law" first settled.

But the backsliders were not corrected, and they gradually increased in number, until, one hundred years later, it was found necessary to call together another synod. There was now a considerable body of schismatics, and they formulated a demand for definite relaxations from the severity of the laws. The Council was again held in the country of Magadha (the modern Oudh), this time in the town of Waythalee. The king, Kalathawka, built a splendid hall, and when all was ready, himself placed the ivory fan on the ledge of the pulpit, and sent a message to the members of the Thenga who had assembled for the conference, saying, "Lords, my task is finished." The relaxations demanded were then discussed. The most important were as follows:—Food might be taken until the shade of the sun was two inches in length; whereas Shin Gautama had directed that for the curbing of the flesh none should be eaten after noontide.

Whey might be drunk after mid-day; forbidden as being a component part of milk, and therefore approaching animal food.

Taree, or palm toddy, might be taken, because it looks like water. This was a particularly bold demand, seeing that all fermented liquors are forbidden, and that in modern days the same plea might be urged on behalf of gin.

Gold and silver might be accepted as alms; the use of them being strictly prohibited.

A junior may lawfully copy a senior even in what is

wrong; whereas no example could be any valid excuse for a wrong act.

Subsequent permission may cover an act; whereas the Weenee required prior permission.

The restriction against indulgences to be in force only in the monasteries; and not for those who might be sojourning in villages.

These points, after lengthy discussion, were all given against the dissenters, and degradation was awarded them as a punishment.

Still matters got worse, and in 241 B.C. the great king Athawka, of Patalipootra, brought about the third and last great Council to cleanse the Church. After nine months' public reading of the Book of Rules and of the most excellent Law, 60,000 heretics were expelled from the Church, and it was resolved to propagate the religion far and wide. This last decision was fraught with the most momentous consequences to Burma, for among the missionaries sent north, south, east, and west from Behar were the two, Thawna and Ohttara, who proceeded to the country of Suvarna Bhoomee, the "Golden Land," and landing at Tha-htohn, now north of Maulmein, but then on the sea-coast, proceeded to disseminate the Buddhist doctrines amongst the tribes in the great river-valleys of the country. It is important to notice that the doctrines they brought with them had just been revised and confirmed by a great Council of the Church. Since then, throughout all Burma, the old geniolatry has been displaced by the teachings of the Buddha. The regulations introduced then in their first purity have been retained ever since practically unchanged, so that at the present time Buddhism exists in Burma in a form much nearer to that which Shin Gautama taught than is found in any country where the Three Precious Things are held in reverence.

The only sect which has at any time started any doctrinal heresy is that of the Paramats. They reject the worship before pagodas and images, and pray only to the Nyan-daw, the godlike wisdom, which abides like a mountain of fire in the heavens, invisible to mortal eyes, and taking no interest and exercising no influence over mundane things. These dissenters pay reverence to the ordinary brethren of the

yellow robe, keep the Ten Precepts, repeat the Bahwanah (Payah, Tayah, Thenga, etc.) and the Eetteepee-thaw, but they never go near the shrines, and recite their prayers and invocations in the jungle or in open fields. It is a kind of reminiscence of fire-worship, an ancestral adoration of the heavens in the sun, caused possibly by a shrinking from the suspicion of idolatry. A cardinal fault in them is that they give no alms, for most religions are at one on the question that charity covers a multitude of sins. The sect was founded at the beginning of this century by a Pohn-gyee, called by his followers Shin Taboung. He lived at Sin-byoo-gyoon, "White Elephant Island," a place half-way between Mandalay and the British frontier, and the dissent would probably never have spread beyond that district, or outlived the life of its originator, had it not been for the king Bodaw Payah. When the Thenga refused to recognise his claim to be the fifth Buddha of this world cycle, he espoused the cause of the Paramats, imposed penalties on all monks who would not accept their tenets, and went so far as to force a Thahthana-being, one of the heads of the Order, to marry, marriage being permissible under the doctrines of the dissenters. This gave the schism a prominence which it could not otherwise have attained, and enabled it to last down to the present time, though its numbers, never very great, have steadily dwindled away. There are perhaps more Paramats in Prome than in any other town of Burma, Lower or Upper. Their most prominent doctrine is that the Shway Nyan-daw existed before the world began, and will exist for all eternity. Ideas may arise from the influence of exterior objects, but when they have been freed from their connection with bodily creations, they have an independent existence, and when once they have come into being continue to live. This is explained by the assertion that the quasi-deity of the Buddha is founded only on his supreme wisdom. Buddha means, etymologically, "the wise," and Shin Gautama was simply an incarnation of the pure Wisdom. Men believed they actually saw him when he was already really a deity—nothing else than the inspiring Nyan-daw, which made the five Khandas appear to have an actual earthly existence. Occasionally an energetic Sadaw excommunicates all the

Paramats under his jurisdiction, and forbids all the laity to sell to them, or have any communication whatever with them, but as a rule they are let alone. The movement is too feeble to threaten any real danger to religion, and has never gained many adherents among the laity.

It is a different matter with the rival parties of the Mahah-gandee and the Soola-gandee. Here there are no heretical doctrines in dispute; it is simply a question of greater adherence to the strict rule of the Order. Instead of, as in the early days of the Assembly, one party crying out against the too great austerity of the majority, it is a sturdy protest of a minority within the Church against the lamentable weakness and laxity of the great body of the Order in the observance of the precepts of the Book of the Enfranchisement. The quarrel is at present limited to Lower Burma, where the greater wealth of the country and the introduction of foreign luxuries among the laity have led to corresponding indulgences in many of the monasteries, against which the Soola-gandees protest and preach with feverish energy. The austere party is strongest in Maulmein, Henzadah, and Pegu, and faction feeling runs so high that street fights between the scholars of the two sects are very common, and often so embittered that the English authorities have to interfere to restore peace in the town, for the laity take sides with equally bitter animosity.

The questions in dispute are entirely matters of discipline. The Puritan party, as the Soola-gandee may very well be called, denounce the habit, which is becoming very frequent, of wearing silk robes. The Kammawah sets forth that the thengan should be stitched together of rags picked up in the streets or in the graveyards, and such panthagoo thengans the Soola-gandees wear and glory in. The Mahah-gandees, on the other hand, have been gradually becoming more and more luxurious. At first new cloth was torn into irregular pieces, and then sewn together. Latterly it has been considered sufficient to tear a corner and stitch it up again, or perhaps only to rip a portion of a seam, and from this to the wearing of silk garments was no very great step. The Puritan party declare that this is simply a scandalous playing with the letter of the law. Again, the Soola-gandees

eat out of the alms-bowl as it comes in from the morning round, whereas the Mahah-gandees empty out the thabeht into plates and make as palatable a meal as possible from their collections, which, on the face of it, is a pandering to fleshly weakness. Others, much more bold in their backsliding, do not hesitate to have a special meal cooked for them every morning by the Kyoung-thah-gyee, and sit down to it smoking hot, after their morning's perambulation, while the begging-bowl is handed over to poor people staying in the monastery, or emptied out for the benefit of the dogs and crows. No sophistry, one would think, could explain away this Sybaritism, but the Mahah-gandees have the assurance to try to make a merit of it, saying that the money expended by the Kappeeya-dayaka on the materials for the breakfast is the proceeds of the sale of previous offerings of the pious—rugs, blankets, lamps, and so on—and by thus making use of it, not only do the people gain merit for their gifts of food, but the monks themselves are enabled to extend their charity to the poor or the birds of the air. That is a severe straining of the command that the Areeya should live by alms.

Similarly when the Mahah-gandee goes abroad he wears sandals on his feet, and protects his shaven crown from the rays of the sun with an umbrella. The austere brother walks the streets barefooted and bareheaded, even though his head may ache and his feet be blistered with the shimmering heat of high noon. Only when he is on a long journey does the Soola-gandee allow himself such superfluities as sandals or umbrella. The Mahah-gandee will receive coin in his own hands, covered by a handkerchief; the Soola-gandee will not take it even through the instrumentality of a pupil, or off a ngway-pa-daytha, a rupee-hung tree, at Tawadehntha feast time. Pwès on feast days, or even in the neighbourhood of the pagodas, are denounced by the reforming party; so are balloons with fireworks in them; the habit many monks have fallen into of going to visit Englishmen, with no other object than curiosity; and above all the noisy saturnalia in the monasteries at the end of Lent which have become so common in Rangoon. It will thus be seen that the great point at issue is the maintenance of

the original humble character of the brotherhood. The different vernacular presses of Rangoon flood the country with controversial tracts written by both parties, and the laity adopt sides and carry polemical discussions into private life. So fierce had the quarrel become, that in 1880 one of the most learned and venerated of the Mandalay heads of the Church, the Think-kazah Sadaw, came down to settle the question. He was received everywhere with extraordinary honours. At Donoo-byoo, the whole of the populace lined the path up to the monastery prepared for him, and kneeling down they threw their hair across the way, so that from the river bank to the steps of the Kyoung, he walked all the way on a carpet of human tresses. But he did not settle which party was in the right. After making abundant inquiries and hearing the most prominent advocates on either side, he halted at Henzadah and announced that he was about to give his decision. Unfortunately it came to his ears that in that town, as well as in several others, the Areeya had been betting freely as to which way he would give his judgment. Thereupon the Sadaw grew furious, denounced both parties alike, and refused to say anything which would countenance the claims of either sect. He remained for a considerable time in the low country, giving numerous addresses for the building up of religion, but never on any occasion throwing out a hint as to which way he leaned, further than that both parties should give way a little and refrain from exhibiting such scandalous dissensions before the heretics. The warfare was calmed for a space, but the old fierce denunciations have broken out again. The opposing abbots bid their lay supporters refrain from giving alms to the rival sect. They recommend all the penalties of excommunication without having the power to go through the formal ceremony. But though the Mahah-gandees have the greater number of followers, the self-denying Soola-gandees have all the more earnest and rightly-thinking men on their side and will probably prevail in the end, though a new great synod may have to be held before that is effected. The head of the reforming party is Oo Ohkgansa, a learned Sadaw, whose monastery is at O'hpo in the Tharrawadi district. He was at one time invited to go up to Mandalay to

assume the control of a Kyoung and spend the rest of his days there. The Burmese Government offered to send down a royal steamer with high dignitaries to escort him to the capital, but the sturdy old "Bishop" refused to forsake his party until he should be persuaded that its principles would gain the victory in the end. And so no doubt they will, for not even the most casual observer can fail to see that they, in their bare ascetic monasteries, are far nearer to the ideal of the founder than the Mahah-gandees with all the appliances of their richly-stocked Kyoungs.

# CHAPTER XV

## PAGODAS

SOME one with a greater regard for alliteration than the truth once said that the principal productions of Burma were pagodas, pohn-gyees, and pariah dogs. This is neat, but inaccurate, like a good many neat things. Nevertheless it is marvellous how many pagodas there are in the country, far exceeding the number of those raised in the sacred island of Ceylon, or by the Thibetans and Chinese, pious Buddhists, though they have fallen into sad doctrinal heresies. A Burman does not notice the multitude of the religious edifices in his country till he leaves it and finds how far more sparing other nations are in their places of worship. No village so poor but what it has its neatly kept shrine, with the remains of others mouldering away round about it. No hill so steep and rocky, or so covered with jungle, as to prevent the glittering gold or snow-white spire rising up to guard the place from ghouls and sprites, and remind the surrounding people of the Saviour Lord, the teacher of Nirvana and the Law. There is good reason for this multiplication of fanes. No work of merit is so richly paid as the building of a pagoda. The Payah-tagah is regarded as a saint on earth, and when he dies he obtains the last release; for him there are no more deaths. The man who sets up a row of water-pots on a dusty road does well; he who raises a ta-gohn-deing, or sacred post, who builds a rest-house, presents an image or a bell, or founds a monastery, gains much koothoh and ensures a happy transincorporation when he passes away; but the Payah-tagah is finally freed from the three calamities, his kan is complete, the merits outweigh the demerits, and

he attains the holy rest. Little wonder then that, with such a glorious reward in store for him, the pious man hoards his wealth for such an object, and that pagodas are so plentiful in the land. It avails little to repair a previous dedication, unless it be one of the great world shrines at Rangoon, Pegu, Prome, or Mandalay. In the case of ordinary pagodas the merit of the repair goes almost entirely to the original founder. Hence that puzzle to Europeans, the building of a bright new place of worship close to one which a very little care would save from crumbling away into a simple tumulus.

The word pagoda is undoubtedly a kind of verbal *hysteron proteron* for the Cinghalese dhagoba, derived from the Sanskrit dhatu garba, a relic shrine, and is properly applied only to a monument raised over some of the remains of the Lord Buddha. Such are dat-daw, pieces of Shin Gautama's flesh; an-daw, his teeth; san-daw, his hair; thin-gyat-daw, the frontal bone; hnyat-yoh-daw, the jaw-bone, besides others. In addition to these there are the sacred utensils and other articles used by the teacher of the Law, such as the thengan, the yellow robe; the thabeht, or alms-bowl; the toung-way-daw, his staff; the padee, or rosary, and other things of the same kind. These holy relics, however, could not go far, even if they had been equitably divided between the great countries professing Buddhism, which they certainly were not. Burma alone claims more personal remains than could possibly have existed. The same thing is, I believe, true of Popish relics in Europe, where pieces of the true cross are as abundant as portions of the dress of the founder of Buddhism are in Burma. It is useless attempting to prove or disprove the authenticity of particular relics. To admit of the multiplication of shrines, models of the sacred things are permitted, and these only, in metal, precious stones, or clay, are deposited under the vast majority of pagodas. But images and sacred books are also so enshrined, and thus arises the classification of the four kinds of shrines, the Zaydee lay-ba.

1. Dahtoo zaydee, erected over relics of the Buddha, or models of these.

2. Pareebawga zaydee, over the sacred eight utensils, or their imitations.

3. Ooddehtha zaydee, enclosing images.

4. Damma zaydee, enclosing the sacred books, such as the *Beetaghat Thohn Bohn*, the three baskets of the Law, and other sacred volumes, like the *Bagawah*, appointed to be read during Lent.

It may be well to remark that the word "pagoda" is not known at all in Burmese, either in its English or Cinghalese form. Such a building is called a Zaydee, from the Pali chaitya, meaning the offering-place, or place of prayer, but the expression Payah, applicable as well to the image as to the shrine, is most frequently used in reference to the more famous centres of worship.

The greatest of the payahs, such as the Shway Dagohn in Rangoon, the most famous of all; the Shway Maw-daw, the lotus-shrine of Pegu; the Shway San-daw, the depository of the sacred hair at Prome; and the Mahah Myat Moonee, the temple of the most exalted saint in Mandalay; all these were founded by single individuals, or brothers to whom the most excellent Master had given hairs from his head to deposit in the specified place. How the exact spot was found, and how successive kings increased the size of the first erection, and donations flowed in from the pious in all parts of the world to beautify and preserve the building, all these particulars are recorded in the palm-leaf records of the various temples. Many later Zaydee, however, have been erected by villages, or by public subscription in whole districts, as pious memorials, or to commemorate some particular event, as well as for the obvious purposes of public convenience on the duty days of the month. Very many, and among them some of the most beautiful, are, on the other hand, the outcome of purely individual desire for merit. Some, such as the chaste, white Seebyo shrine at Mengohn, near Mandalay, are built in remembrance of individuals; the graceful pagoda mentioned being erected by a recent monarch in memory of a favourite queen. Under all, however, to render them sacred, are buried some of the holy things. Without these, no htee, or umbrella, could be placed on the summit of the spire.

These objects are deposited in the tapanah teik, a square chamber, built in the basement of every payah, and always

the first thing finished. Not only one, but many things are thus enclosed. Captain Cox, who saw the first beginnings of the huge Mengohn pagoda, describes the tapanah teik of that vast mountain of brickwork. It measured sixty-one and a half feet square, and was eleven feet deep. The interior was plastered white and gaily painted, and was divided into a number of compartments of various sizes to receive the offerings of the king and the courtiers, the innermost naturally containing the most sacred. The dedicated treasures themselves were very numerous, including a great variety of miniature pagodas and monasteries in silver and gold of varying degrees of purity; images of the same materials and of polished alabaster, some of them four feet high; a number of gold caskets, probably containing models of the sacred teeth and bones; besides these, there was a miscellaneous collection of other things—slabs of coloured glass, precious stones, white jars, such as are used by the royal family, and finally a soda-water machine, then almost as much a novelty in England as in Burma. The offerings did not strike Captain Cox as being very valuable, but the then king, Bodaw Payah, cared a good deal more for his own special glory than for the raising of religion. Not long afterwards he claimed to be a new Buddha, and because the Sacred Order would not recognise his right to the title, turned heretic, and victimised the monks with renegade zeal.

The relic chamber at the great Shway Maw-daw offers a very decided contrast. The Buddha gave two hairs of his head to two brothers, with instructions to enshrine them on the Thoo-da-thana hill. An earthquake revealed the exact spot to them, and a host of byammahs and nat-dewahs came down to take part in the depositing of the relics. A chamber, ten cubits square, was prepared, and at the bottom was laid a slab of pearly white marble, set with diamonds. A similar slab, studded with emeralds, formed the lid. The Tha-gyah king placed a golden cradle in the centre of the bottom slab, and round this were arranged images of the chief disciples of Shin Gautama, each holding a golden bouquet. The jewelled casket containing the hairs was placed on the cradle, and high festival was held for many days. Numbers of other images of the Buddha himself, and of many eminent disciples, were

placed round the sides of the tapanah teik, and countless offerings were made, the Tha-gyah king giving ten billions of gold, each of his queens forty thousand of silver; the father of the two brethren one thousand of gold, and many others equally great sums. But this was in the brave days of old.

Still even nowadays very costly offerings are often deposited in the relic chamber. An almost invariable gift is a representation in gold of the Lord Buddha, with the hooded snake raising itself over him, as in the images of Vishnu in India, or a great model of the Great Master as he received the supreme wisdom under the bawdee-bin. Examples of the last may be seen in the South Kensington Museum, as also of the Saboo-patee payah, representing him with the tower-like royal crown, the wings on legs and arms, and other emblems recalling the king's son who went out to dedicate himself as the Buddha and the conqueror of Mahn-nat. Open-handed piety is quite as frequent as of yore, only the chroniclers of modern days have not the florid imaginations of their predecessors.

The dedication of a payah is a high festival, but there is no prescribed ritual in the sacred books, and each individual pohn-gyee, after reciting the precepts and the Eettee peethaw, has a form of his own, embracing portions of the law and the sacred discourses. A prominent function in the service, as indeed always in giving alms, is the yayset-chah, the pouring out of water drop by drop on the ground. The great king Bimbathahra did it himself from a gold cup when he presented the Wayloowoon or Bamboo-grove monastery, and so likewise it is recorded of the rich man Anahtabehn. The idea is to share the merit of the action with all creatures, and at the same time to call to witness, besides the mathohn-dayay nats, all gods and men, that the donor may have due reward for his piety. The same thing is frequently done in order to legally hand over a gift. As the water falls drop by drop on the ground, the pohn-gyees read out the formulæ, the substance of which is as follows: "Firm in my belief in the three precious things, the Lord, the Law, and the Assembly, I make this offering that I may be freed

from all present and future miseries. May all creatures suffering torment in the four states of punishment reach the happy seats of nat-dewahs. May all my relatives, friends, and all men inhabiting this earth and the ten thousand worlds, share in the benefits of this meritorious work. O earth, and ye spirits, guardians of this place, bear me witness to the piety of this gift."

It is worthy of note that it is explicitly stated that the inward dispositions of the giver have nothing to do with the merit resulting from a good work. The merits are strictly proportioned to the degree of sanctity or perfection of him who receives the alms. Hence the glorious release which awaits an otherwise bad man who erects a pagoda.

Zaydees are of many shapes and degrees of elaboration, but one common idea may be traced through them all. If you ask a Burman monk the cause of the variations in the form of the payah, he will tell you that the Buddha left no instructions regarding them in the holy books, but had only said that a small mound should be raised over his bones in the form of a heap of rice. Apart from the relation in which the payah stands to the Buddha himself as the representation of the holy one sunk in meditation, the ostensible object is the preservation of relics, and these are to be laid in a shrine, like the lotus-bud of which the zaydee is typical, and later by an extending of the lines got the form of a bell or spire. In the Malla Lingaya Woottoo we are told that the infant Buddha in the womb of Queen Maia resembled a lotus-bud, or a beautiful pagoda, and the conjunction of this idea with the simple original tumulus has undoubtedly led to the typical form as now seen in Burma. The names for various parts of the building all recall the idea of the flower-bud, with its young leaves folded in adoration. Thus the rounded swelling just below the slender spire is called the hnget-pyaw-boo, the banana palm-bud, and on the extreme summit at the top of the htee is the sehn-boo, the diamond-bud, which in not a few poor districts is represented by a soda-water bottle, which combines the resemblance to a flower bud with the good offices of a lightning conductor. The hnget-pyaw-boo is usually sur-

rounded with lavish adornment of the sacred lotus. The payahs that rise up into a plain cone or spire are therefore the nearest to the original tumulus, the top being simply drawn out into a conical point. On the other hand, the bell-like pagodas are only a direct imitation of the lotus-bud, and this has led to the more rounded dome-like forms, sometimes called thabeht hmouk, the inverted begging-pot. This term, however, is applied to the swelling-out round part on every pagoda, and has thence been borrowed to designate special shrines. It has nothing to do with phallic worship as some have imagined, nor is there any idea of the resemblance to a human skull. Such grim reminders of mortality common in Thibetan Buddhism do not commend themselves to the Burman.

The buildings are all made of crumbling, sun-dried brick, for it is enough to gratify the pious feeling of the moment, and even the long years that the most solidly built stone edifices might last would only be as an evanescent drop in the stream of eternity. Thus the Burman sees no harm in building pagodas of sand, or even cloth and pasteboard, and in the national annals the victory which false shrines won over more substantial erections is a favourite theme. In Lower Burma, the payahs are all of the simplest pattern, derived from the archetypal rice-heap and the lotus-bud. They are all solid pyramidal cones, rising with a gradually diminishing rounded outline, and surmounted by a htee, or "umbrella" spire, a construction resembling the musical instrument called a *chapeau chinois*, formed of concentric rings, lessening to a rod with a small vane called hnget-ma-nah on the top. They are almost without exception erected on more or less elevated platforms. Burma is quite different from other Buddhist countries, where the relics are exhibited on great feast days. The payah is perfectly solid with the exception of the tapanah teik, situated directly under the spire and the htee, and there is no means of entering this to view the sacred relics. The addition of spires and the elaboration of the central pyramid are later thoughts, and give hints of the great architectural efforts to be seen in Upper Burma.

The peaks of Mount Myemmoh are said to have furnished the first notion. In some cases, as at the Shway San-daw of Prome, the central spire is surrounded at its base by a circle of small gilded temples or zaydeeyan, forming a continuous wall round the pagoda, each containing an image of the Buddha, and suggesting the idea of the Setyawala hills round the world-girding Thamohddaya sea. In almost all the larger payahs there are arched wings on each face of the lower platform, serving, as it were, as ante-chapels, and each containing a large Gautama. It is obvious how easily the introduction of these niche chapels led to the halls and aisles of the Pagahn temples. Still this elaboration remains only a sign of architectural genius, and not of greater sanctity, for in every case the building itself serves only as a meet place for meditation and praise in thought or words. The great temples of Pagahn, with their galleries, transepts, and corridors, have more of the character of churches in the ordinary acceptation of the word, and the Ananda above all, with its echoing vaults and dim religious light, reminds one especially of some great cathedral of the Middle Ages. But the outward magnificence of the Pagahn temples does not win for them the reverence which is shown to vastly plainer bell pagodas.

Of all the shrines, the Shway Dagohn Payah, the great pagoda of Rangoon and the most venerable place of worship in all the Indo-Chinese countries, is the finest and the most universally visited. Its peculiar sanctity is due to the fact that it is the only payah, known to Buddhists, which contains actual relics, not only of Shin Gautama, but of the three Budhs who preceded him in this world. In the Tapanah Teik of the pagoda, along with eight hairs from the head of the Buddha in the eleventh andrakap of whose cycle we are now living, there exist the yay-thouk-palah, the drinking-cup of Kaukkathan; the thengan or robe of Gawnagohng; and the toungway or staff of Kathapah. Little wonder then that the glittering gold spire on the last spur of the Pegu hills attracts at the time of the annual festival in March, pilgrims, not only from the farthest parts of Burma, but from Cambodia, Siam, and Corea. The stately pile

stands upon a mound partly natural, partly artificial, which has been cut into two rectangular terraces, one above the other, each side, as is the case with all pagodas, facing one of the cardinal points of the compass. The upper terrace, which has been carefully levelled and paved and repaved by the pious, rises 166 feet from the level of the ground, and is 900 feet long by 685 wide according to English measurement. The ascent was by four flights of brick steps, one opposite the centre of each face, but the western approach has been closed by the fortifications built by the English conqueror to dominate the town and secure the pagoda, where there was so much desperate fighting in the Burmese wars. Ordinarily with other pagodas, the eastern flight is the most holy and therefore the most cared for; but the town of Rangoon lies to the south, and consequently this ascent is the grandest.

At the foot are two gigantic leogryphs, built of brick, covered with plaster, and gaily painted. From them up to the platform, the soung-dan, the long stairs are covered by a rising series of handsomely-carved teak roofs, supported on huge wood and masonry pillars. The heavy crossbeams and the panelling are in many places embellished with frescoes, representing scenes in the life of the Great Master and his disciples, and with hideously curious representations of the tortures of the wicked in the fiery chambers of hell. The steps themselves are exceedingly primitive and dilapidated. They have been manufactured piece by piece, apparently by ardent seekers after merit. Here and there they are made of broad stone flags from Penang and Bombay, but for great part of the distance they consist of simple sun-dried bricks, worn almost into a slope by the pious feet of myriads of worshippers — bare feet too, for none but Europeans are allowed to mount the steps with boots on. The stairs are wonderfully uncomfortable, not merely because they are so dilapidated, but because they are seemingly constructed with the object of preventing any one from ascending or descending with unseemly haste. They are too broad to mount two at a time, and too low to suit occidental tastes taken singly. This method of enforcing respect is characteristic of the Burmese nation, and reminds

one of the nails projecting through the floors in the Royal Palace at Mandalay.

The stairs debouch on a broad, open, flagged space, which runs all round the pagoda, and is left free for worshippers. From the centre of this springs from an octagonal bee-nat-daw, or plinth, the profusely gilt, solid brick payah. It has a perimeter of 1355 feet, and rises to a height of about 370, or a little higher than St. Paul's Cathedral. On the summit is the htee, the gilt iron-work "umbrella," on each of whose many rings hang multitudes of gold and silver jewelled bells, which tinkle melodiously with every breath of air. This htee was made and presented by Mindohn Min, the late King of Burma, and was placed on the summit at a cost of not much less that £50,000. It was constructed by voluntary labour; and subscriptions in money and jewels, with which the vane and the uppermost band are richly studded, flowed in from all parts of Burma. The old king, "the convener of the fifth great synod," strove hard to have it placed on the pagoda entirely at his own cost and by his own men; but the British Government rightly and firmly refused, for had this been done it would have been regarded by British Burmans as an acknowledgment of his suzerainty. Eventually it was handed over at the frontier to native officials and a body of Buddhist elders, by whom it was conveyed to the holy Thehngoottara Mount, and there successfully placed in position. The old htee was lowered intact, and now stands on the platform, filled in and gaily painted like a small pagoda, or a florid marriage cake, beside a still earlier decoration which it had supplanted.

At the corners of the basement are somewhat Assyrian-like figures of Manoht-theeha, creatures with two bodies and one head, half lion, half man, with huge ears and ruffled crest, and all round about are stone figures of lions displaying an ample show of teeth between their grinning lips. The tale is that long ages ago a king's son who had been abandoned in the forest, was found by a lioness and suckled by her. When the prince grew to man's estate, he left his foster-mother and swam a broad river to escape from her. The tender mother's heart burst when he reached the other side, and she died; and in remembrance of her love, lions' figures

are placed at the foot of all pagoda steps, and round the building itself.

The four chapels at the foot of the pagoda are adorned at the sides by colossal figures of the sitting Buddha, and in the farthest recess, in a niche of its own, is a still more goodly figure, the thick gilding darkened in many places by the fumes of thousands of burning tapers and candles. Hundreds of Gautamas, large and small, sitting, standing, and reclining, white and black, of alabaster, sun-dried clay, or the wood of the Pehn-nè, the jack tree (*Artocarpus integrifolia*), gilded or plain, surround and are propped up on the larger images. Even the figures in the niches are elaborate carved woodwork, representing figures dancing or fighting, and others flying through the air, or, with head on hand, sunk in meditation ; monsters of the woods and hills and streams. High stone altars for the offering of rice and flowers stand before the lions, the offering being made to the whole pagoda and not to them. Under the Manohttheehas at the corners are niche altars for burnt offerings. On the outer edge of the platform are a host of small zaydeeyan, each with its htee ; tasoungs, image houses, overflowing with the gifts of generations of pilgrims ; figures of the Budh in single, low stone chapels ; tagohn-deing, tall posts, flaunting from which are long cylindrical streamers, of bamboo framework, pasted over with paper, depicting scenes in sacred history, and often inscribed with pious invocations from the offerer ; others are surrounded by the sacred hentha, the Brahminy Goose (*Phœnicopterus rubra*), the emblem of the Talaings, or the kalaweik, the crane of the Burmese. Interspersed among these on the outer edge of the open platform are multitudes of bells of all sizes. Beside each bell, all of which are hung on stout crossbeams supported by two side posts, lie deer's antlers, and pieces of wood with which the worshipper strikes them as he passes. On the eastern side, covered by a great wooden shed, hangs one of enormous size, inside which five or six men can stand with ease. It was presented by King Tharrawaddy in 1840, on the occasion of a state visit to Rangoon and the payah. It measures seven feet seven and a half inches across the mouth, fifteen inches in thickness, fourteen feet high, and weighs 94,682 lbs. With

a proper hammer it ought to give forth a splendid sound, but the ordinary antlers and posts of wood used fail to do it justice. It is second in size in Burma to the great bell at Mengohn, which, apart from the monster at Moscow, is the largest in the world. There is a long inscription in the Mahah Ganda (the great, sweet voice) at Rangoon, recounting the merits gained by the monarch who presented it and the praises of him chanted by the Nats, the guardians of the empire. The bell has a curious history. After the second Burmese war, the English made an attempt to carry it off to Calcutta as a trophy, but by some mishap the Mahah Ganda toppled over, and sank to the bottom of the Rangoon river. English engineers made several attempts but failed to raise it. The Burmans, after some years, begged that the sacred bell might be restored to them, if they could recover it. The petition was granted with a sneer, but they set to work, got it out, and carried it in triumph to the place where it now hangs. This success was ascribed by the thoughtful to supernatural aid, but the common people chuckled in a carnal and exultant manner over the victory, and not without very fair reason, for their appliances were of the most primitive kind.

Buddhists fix the date of the erection of the Shway Dagohn Payah at 588 B.C., but the site must have been sacred for cycles before, since the relics of the three preceding Buddhas were found interred, when the two Talaing brothers, Poo (dove) and Tapaw (plenty), came with their precious eight hairs to the Thehngoottara hill. The original payah is said in the palm-leaf history to have been only twenty-seven feet high, and it has attained its present height by being repeatedly cased with an outer covering of bricks several feet in thickness. Every now and again it has been completely regilt. Sinbyoo Shĭn, king of Burma, towards the end of the last century, used his own weight in gold in the process. He scaled twelve stone three, a remarkably good weight for a Burman, and the gold used cost over £9000. The last occasion when the whole vast bulk was gilt was in 1871, when King Mindohn sent down his htee. On every feast-day and oobohnay, however, numbers of the pious clamber up wherever they can and fix on little squares

of gold-leaf, packets of which can be bought at the stalls below for a few rupees. The consequence is that every now and again the spire breaks out in a rash of bright patches, which give it a mysterious, rough, uneven appearance on clear moonlight nights. It is difficult to say what the real age of the building is, if, as sceptical Englishmen tell us, we are not to place implicit faith in the palm-leaf record. Trustworthy documents reach no further back than the time of the Peguan Queen Shin-saw-boo, who reigned in the early part of the sixteenth century; but there is every reason to believe that a pagoda existed there long before her time. The shrine has remained unaltered in size or shape since 1564, and probably will never be altered again. At all times and at all distances it looks imposing and sublime, like the religion whose followers have built it.

At the base of the pagoda hill are many monasteries embowered in their groves of palmyra palms and shady trees; and to the south is a small convent of nuns, not far from the zayat which the king of Siam had built for pilgrims from his dominions. Similar rest-houses line the Soung-dan all the way up to the pagoda, and they always have occupants; while at the season of the feast in Taboung they are crowded to overflowing. Lepers, and cripples, and nuns in their white robes, line the steps, and cry out in piteous tones for alms from the passers-by. Nearer the top and round the platform itself are sellers of candles and coloured tapers, Chinese incense-sticks, and prayer-flags, along with abundance of gold-leaf. Numbers of young girls sit about with flowers, especially of the lotus, and meats of different kinds for offerings. Others—these always enfranchised pagoda slaves—sell toys and articles for household use. The platform is never deserted. Even long after midnight the voice of the worshipper may be heard in the night air, chanting in solemn monotone his pious aspirations, while on a duty-day, and especially on a feast-day, the laughing, joyous crowd of men and maidens, in their gay national dress, makes the platform of the Shway Dagohn one of the finest sights in the world.

The Shway Dagohn Payah is by far the most widely celebrated of the great Buddhist shrines, but there are others which, if not so venerated in other lands, still enjoy an even

greater local reputation for sanctity, and attract pilgrims from all parts of Burma, British and Independent, with now and again a band of pious worshippers from distant countries. Chief among these is the Shway Hmaw-daw at Pegu, which commands Talaing worship before even the shrine of "the slanted beam" on the Thehngoottara hill. The bank close by it was covered with lotus blossoms immediately on the construction of the shapely spire and the great Tha-gyah Min, and countless Byammahs and Nat-dewahs assisted at the enshrinement of the relics. As with many other fanes, the king granted to the pagoda, and set apart from secular uses for ever, the whole space round it on which the shadow of the original pile fell between sunset and sunrise. Several hundred families were dedicated to its service, and in 1881 large sums were raised throughout all the low country for the manufacture of a new htee and the gilding of the whole surface, while many wondrous signs in the neighbourhood attested the sacred character of the undertaking. Similarly the Shway San-daw at Prome, with its multitude of bells on the cramped hill-top, enjoys a special reputation on account of the prophecy there spoken by Shin Gautama himself, and the connection of the payah with the national hero-king, Dwoht-taboung, as recorded in the sacred books. In proof of this exists to the present day, and may be seen at the foot of the hill, a huge stone with an inscription which none but the pure-minded can read, and few even of them understand. In other places examples of this dooganan kyay-ganan, a kind of cypher-writing or cryptograph as it appears to the unenfranchised, exists, and usually records in mystic phraseology and inverted orthography the alms presented to the pagoda. Many of the lists of donations are, however, graven in a less cramped kyouk-sah, or "stone writing," the givers having probably had a weak hankering after earthly fame. Thus a goodly marble slab with a long list of names may be seen at the Shway Hmaw-daw and a tablet near the Myah Thalohn, the Temple of the Emerald Bed (of the Buddha) at Ma-gway in Upper Burma records how Min Din and Min La-goh had in the year 2399 of religion covered the whole payah with yellow cloth, repaired it thoroughly, and had it painted red and gold. An exact account is given of the

amount of materials used and the money paid to workmen, and the inscription ends up with a prayer that the family of the donors might be gratified with the birth of a son. Near it is a magic stone with the figure of a hare, surrounded by stars, deeply graven in it to represent the moon, and a peacock to represent the sun.

A frequent adjunct of many pagodas is the Shway Żet-daw, the imprint of the Lord Buddha's foot. It is too nearly square to command a painter's or sculptor's praise, and the toes are all of the same length, as may be seen in the example carried off by Captain Marryat, the novelist, in the first Burmese war, and now preserved in the British Museum. The sole is divided into a hundred and eight squares (tayah shi' kwet), and on them are many lekkhana, representations of monasteries, pyathats, tigers, kalaweiks, henthas, parrots, sehppootee, fish, and the like, to signify that all things were under the feet of the Great Master. The number of beads on the rosary corresponds with the number of squares on the Shway Zet-daw. The most famous example is at the pagoda of that name east of Mandalay, the great resort of the Shans, and another well-known one is opposite Magway, near Minboo, where the mud volcanoes are, "the boiling vats of the nagahs." But there are many specimens all over the country, not a few with the figure of a nagah, or sea monster, reared over them.

Most famous among the small pagodas is the Kyaik-htee-yoh, insignificant in size, but unique from its position. The hill on which it stands takes its name from the payah, and is over three thousand five hundred feet in height. On its summit are numbers of granitoid boulders, many of them balanced in a most extraordinary way, and all the more striking surmounted by little shrines. The Kyaik-htee-yoh stands on a huge boulder, which itself rests on a projecting rock, separated from the rest of the hill by a chasm, fathomless to the eye, and reaching, so say the villagers, far below the depth of the hill. The boulder stands on the extreme verge of the bare rock, and hangs over it as if a gust of wind or a few extra pounds added would make it topple over and crash down the dizzy height far away into the green valley below. To this shrine people from all parts of the country,

but more especially the Talaings, come in the month of February, and cast jewellery and precious stones into the yawning rift, and, clambering up the rock by the aid of a bamboo ladder, cover the payah with flowers and small lighted candles, making it look like a new nebulous constellation from the far-off plains. Inquirers are told with the utmost confidence that the pagoda is five thousand years old. It certainly has been there time out of mind, and the boulder has solely been kept in its place by the hair buried under the shrine, and given to a hermit by the great Budh himself when he returned from Tawa-dehntha, the second heaven of the Nat-dewahs, on the occasion of his preaching the Law to his mother. Near it is a spring which always flows freely with crystalline water, unless there is evil talk among the assembled people or if the sexes are not separated. A complete Thin-bohng-gyee, the alphabet, is graven on the rock. The view from the pagoda is superb; bounded on the east by the blue Martaban hills, fading away into the dim peaks of Siam, and extending southwards over tangled jungle and yellow paddy lands to the bright waves of the Gulf of Martaban, while to the west the jewelled speck of the pagoda at Pegu almost leads one to imagine the stately bulk of the sacred Shway Dagohn beyond.

There are many such shrines on the abrupt limestone hills in the Maulmein district, where the devotee has to clamber up bare rock faces, and scramble through treacherous débris, occasionally swinging over perilous deeps on the precarious footing of a rough bamboo ladder; his offerings tied to his back, and his heart between his teeth. And yet women are found to make the ascent, especially at the Zwè-kabin, the precipitous "Duke of York's nose," some forty miles up the Sittang river from Maulmein, where the Englishman is lost in amazement as to how they ever got the bricks and ironwork up the rocks to construct the pagoda and the htee. Yet thousands of people scramble up at the time of the annual feast, and the pagoda is as well adorned with offerings as any in the flat lands down by the sea, where a rise of a few feet in the ocean would put hundreds of square miles under water.

Every district pagoda has its special feast and all are

well attended, for even though the locality may be thinly populated there are always to be found visitors from other places round about ; partly as a kind of neighbourly courtesy, partly because there is always some fun in the shape of a travelling troupe, or a marionette play, at a pagoda feast, and chiefly, there can be no denying, from a feeling of genuine piety and a real desire to acquire merit. Pagoda feasts enable a Burman to see the world, as far as it can be seen in his native land. Without the periodical festivals he would only stop chewing betel in the wattled bothy where he was born to go out and smoke a cheroot round his patch of paddy land, and speculate on the time when the Rangoon or Bassein broker would come up to buy his crop from him. Most of the district Burmans would never see the Englishman and his doings were it not for the annual pilgrimage to Rangoon to worship at Shway Dagohn. During the rest of the year, unless he lives in the headquarters of an assistant commissionership, all he sees of the British occupation is a stray visit from a young official out shooting, or the chance appearance of an inspector of police in search of a criminal.

Similarly very few Burmans, except those attracted by business to the capital, would ever visit Mandalay were it not for the great "Arakan pagoda." The Mahah Myat Moonee Payah is rendered especially sacred by the sitting image of Shin Gautama there preserved, and is on this account regarded by Upper Burmans as not inferior in sanctity to the Shway Dagohn itself. The huge brass image, twelve feet in height, was brought over the hills from Akyab in the year 1784 (1146 B.E.). According to the inscription, the king drew this Arakan Gautama to the shrine by the charm of his piety, but the historical books speak only of rough force of arms. However that may be, it is a mystery how the huge masses of metal—the figure was cast in three sections —were brought over the steep, pathless mountain sides. The inscription flatters the king, and the monks ascribe the feat to supernatural help, as they do the faultless joining together of the pieces. The image was set up, so says the legend, during the lifetime of the Great Master. The utmost skill and most persistent energy had failed in fitting the parts together, and the feelings of the pious were fearfully lacerated

by the cracking of the head in their futile struggles. But the Buddha, perceiving from afar what was going on, and ever full of pity, came himself to the spot, and, embracing the image seven times, so joined together the fragments that the most sceptical eye cannot detect the points of junction, while the head was restored to its pristine smoothness. So like was the image, and so sublime the effulgence which shone around during the manifestation, that the reverently gazing crowd could not determine which was the model and which the Master. The resemblance has no doubt faded away with the wickedness of later times, for unlike most Burmese images, the Payah Gyee has most gross and repulsive features. Inspired by the divine embrace the figure spoke, but afterwards received the Teacher's command never again to open its lips till Areemadehya should come to reveal the new Law. The shrine in which it stands is one of the most splendid in the country. The image itself is covered by a great seven-roofed pya-that with goodly pillars, the ceiling gorgeous with mosaics. Long colonnades, supported on 252 massive pillars, all richly gilt and carved, with frescoed roofs and sides, lead up to it, and daily from the royal palace used to come sumptuous offerings in stately procession, marshalled by one of the ministers and shaded by the white umbrella, the emblem of sovereignty and the prerogative of the Arbiter of Existence. On its first arrival a hundred and twenty families of Arakanese were assigned as slaves of the payah, and the number was frequently afterwards added to. In a long gallery there is an enormous number of inscriptions, gathered from all parts of the country, many on gilt slabs of marble, a still greater number on sandstone. All day long circles of constantly renewed worshippers chant aloud the praises of the Buddha, and the air is heavy with the effluvia of candles and the odours from thousands of smouldering incense-sticks. Within the precincts of the pagoda is a large tank, tenanted by sacred turtle, who wax huge on the rice and cakes thrown them by the multitudes of pilgrims. Probably not even at the Shway Dagohn Payah is more enthusiastic devotion shown than at the Payah Gyee in Mandalay.

Near the royal city, about nine miles up the river, on the right bank, is a huge monster of a pagoda, built on a low

green bluff, running out from the barren, pagoda-sprinkled Sagaing hills. The groundwork of the great misshapen Mengohn Payah covers a square of 450 feet and its height is 155 feet, about one-third of the elevation intended for it when completed; but Mintaya Gyee, the crack-brained monarch who founded it, ran short of funds, and the building was stopped. Nature was jealous of the miniature mountain —the largest mass of brickwork in the world—and an earthquake in 1839 rent the gigantic cube with fantastic fissures from top to bottom, and cast down great masses of masonry, tons upon tons in weight, and yet not sufficient to destroy the main structure, massive and imperishable as Time itself. There it stands, unharmed alike by rain-floods and blistering suns, and laughing even at earthquakes. Perhaps it was this proud stability which induced the late king, Mindohn Min, to attempt an even greater work. He planned a huge shrine to be raised east of Mandalay, under the shadow of the Shan hills. The Yankeen-toung Payah was to be larger than the Mengohn monster, and it was to be built of stone. A fair-sized hill was hewn into blocks to furnish material. Canals several miles long were dug to convey the stones, and huge lighters were built upon them. The whole kingdom was called upon to furnish men to labour a few months at a time on the pious work. Architects, monks, foreigners, were called upon to offer suggestions and make plans. A French engineer, who declared that, with 5000 men working every day, it would require eighty-four years to complete the original design, came near being crucified on the spot. After four years' labour the basement, some four feet high, was completed, and then the Convener of the Fifth Great Synod returned to the village of Nats. Theebaw Min was the last man likely to finish the work, and there lie the mountains of squared stones and the heaps of rubble for the centre. The canals have silted up and the lighters foundered with their unloaded cargoes, and instead of a monument, King Mindohn has simply left a ghastly chaos. What kan King Mintaya Gyee must have had to get so far as he did!

The whole neighbourhood of Mandalay, Amarapoora and Ava is rich with splendid fanes; but a detailed account of

them would only weary the reader, as the visiting of them tires out the non-religious observer. Nevertheless some must at least be adverted to. There is the Koo-thoo-daw, the "Royal Merit House," the richly-gilt shrine built by King Theebaw's uncle, the "War Prince," one of the most compact and tastefully adorned of pagodas, with beautifully carved gilt gates, the main spire being surrounded by a triple square of shrines, each shrine containing a marble slab engraved with a chapter of the Beetaghat on the back and front. The text of the three volumes of the Buddhist Scripture was carefully collated by the most learned Sadaws in the royal city, and is considered the best extant.

Especially interesting also is the Atoo-ma-shee, the incomparable payah, the great, oblong, lofty-terraced chapel of his late majesty, outwardly plain white, but within splendid with a gorgeously decorated shrine, purple and scarlet, and gold hangings, and velvet carpets. Here are preserved the gold spittoon, betel-box, kalawaik, and other paraphernalia of the late king. Unhappily it was burnt in 1892.

Down the river there are hundreds of others of every variety and degree of decoration. There is the Nagah Yohn Payah, the whole building wrought into the form of a dragon; the huge round-domed Koung-hmoo-daw, and the "king's victory pagoda" at Sagaing, the "golden cock-scratching," on the other side, commemorating a favourite legend of the boundless charity of the Budh. Glistening white pinnacles, or flashing gold spires, far up the Sagaing hills, with thousands of steps wending wearily up over the steep, rough hill-side, and gazing up to them from the Amarapoora side, great massy temples, frowning over the river with all the stern solidity of a knightly hold. Each with its legend, some tale of bloodshed or piety, some event in Burmese history, or birth-story of the Buddha.

Most renowned, however, for its pagodas is Pagahn, in many respects the most remarkable religious city in the world. Jerusalem, Rome, Kieff, Benares, none of them can boast the multitude of temples, and the lavishness of design and ornament that make marvellous the deserted capital on the Irrawaddy. Deserted it practically is, for the few flimsy huts that stand by the river are inhabited only by pagoda

slaves and men condemned to perpetual beggary. For eight miles along the river-bank and extending to a depth of two miles inland, the whole space is thickly studded with pagodas of all sizes and shapes, and the very ground is so thickly covered with crumbling remnants of vanished shrines, that according to the popular saying you cannot move foot or hand without touching a sacred thing. Some of the zaydees are all but perfect. Restored by the pious, they stand out glistening snow-white, only to render more striking the hoary, weather-beaten ruins of their less-cared-for neighbours. Here the bell-shaped, solid pyramid of Lower Burma is rarely seen. The religious structures fully merit the word temple as understood in ordinary language. To quote Colonel Yule, who gives a detailed account of the principal shrines in his *Mission to Ava*, there are all kinds: "The bell-shaped pyramid of dead brickwork in all its varieties; the same raised over a square or octagonal cell, containing an image of the Buddha; the bluff, knob-like dome of the Ceylon Dagobats, with the square cap which seems to have characterised the most ancient Buddhist *chaityas*, as represented in the sculptures at Sanchi, and in the ancient model pagodas found near Buddhist remains in India; the fantastic boo-payah, or pumpkin pagoda, which seemed rather like a fragment of what we might conceive the architecture of the moon than anything terrestrial, and many variations on these types. But the predominant and characteristic form is that of the cruciform vaulted temple."

The Irrawaddy just below Pagahn widens out like a gigantic lake to over two miles in breadth, and the view of the sacred city from far down the river is particularly fine. Towering above the others rise the great temples of Ananda, Ta-pyee-nyoo, and Gawdapalin, like visions of old-world cathedrals strayed into the desert. Round about them gradually rise into view hoary round towers, like a border "peel"; airy minarets as of an underground mosque; apparitions like the pyramids, chiselled into fairy terraced fretwork; huge bulbous mushrooms with slim lanterns on their backs, like the wide studio of a mad architect. There is a memorial line which, placing letters for numbers, declares the sum total of the pagodas to be 9999.

Hlè win-yoh than ta-nyan nyan
Pagahn payah poung.

The cartwheel's creaking strains
Pass Pagahn's storied fanes.

Probably, however, there are not nearly so many in anything like a complete state. Pagahn ceased to be capital in 1284 A.D. The Emperor of China had sent a vast army to avenge the murder of an ambassador. The Burmese king pulled down a thousand arched temples, a thousand smaller ones, and four thousand square temples to strengthen the fortifications. But a prophecy found under one of the desecrated shrines robbed him of his courage, and he fled to the south; and ever since Pagahn has remained in its present practically deserted state. The whole ground within the old walls is strewn with bricks and mortar. Some of the zaydees are strangled with jungle growth, huge bushes spring from their summits and sides and tear the masonry asunder, and with the vast majority no attempt is made to arrest the ravages of time.

Few, if any, contain actual relics. The cloistered and terraced temples are simply receptacles for huge images of the Buddha and others. The corridors of the Ananda and Gawdapalin are filled with sculptured groups representing events in the life of the Great Master, and figures of eminent disciples and yahanda. In the central recesses, where are the colossal figures of the Buddhas, the light is cunningly admitted from above so as to fall on the calm gilded face, producing a most weird and striking effect. But Pagahn would require a monograph itself, and with it should be compared Shway Goo, between Mandalay and Bhamaw. That sacred island is a perfect forest of pagodas, and only fails to obtain wider fame because of the existence of Pagahn. There are 999 shrines within its limits, and a much larger proportion of these exist intact than is the case with Pagahn, though none of them can compare with the magnificence of the Ananda.

The question of the architecture of the Pagahn temples, which is so different in style from that found in other parts of Burma, has been fully discussed in Colonel Yule's admir-

able *Mission to Ava*. He omits, however, to notice the fact that Anawrata-saw Min, when he established Buddhism in Pagahn, built all the pagodas and temples after the exact model of those then existing in Thatohn, in the same order and of the same size. The town of Thatohn, above Maulmein, was the first settlement of Thawna and Ohttara, the missionaries from Central India who introduced the teachings of the Lord Buddha into Burma. There was certainly an ancient Hindu colony there, and its inhabitants may have brought some notions of their architecture with them. But whether this be so or not, Burmans find source for pride in the admitted fact that "there is nothing in India to compare with the classical beauty of some of the smaller temples, or the stupendous architectural majesty of the Ananda, or the Ta-pyee-nyoo."

The following song is taken from a very favourite play, *Sawpay Sawmay*, written by a Pegu dramatist and published in 1880, and gives an idea of the canticles sung at the dedication of pagodas and similar ceremonies. It is set to a very popular air, the Yohdaya Nan-thehn Than, "the Siamese Palace Tune," but I have not ventured to try to reproduce the original complicated metre. The sikkè or magistrate in question was Oo Moung Galay, a younger brother of the late Oo Ohn, long the only Burmese C.I.E., and once second judge of the Small Cause Court in Rangoon.

### THE GILDING OF THE SHWAY MAW-DAW

Far-famed and bright, the Shway Maw-Daw
Is known where'er the Sacred Law
To toiling millions brings the peace,
Bids grief be still and turmoil cease.
Fair glory of Peguan land
Revered on earth's most distant strand,
Not more Dagohn's great golden pile
Hath honour in the Southern Isle,
Where'er beneath the zampoo tree
The pious bend the suppliant knee,
Than thou the glorious lotus shrine
High temple of the hairs divine.
As leaps on high the funeral flame
Of some yahan of sainted name,

A beacon light to Neh'ban's rest
And haven sure to men distressed,
So skywards reared, thy shapely spire
Upsprings a pyramid of fire.

The hoar seer's words are now proved true,
Spoke ages since while yet all new
The callow world in earnest youth
Revered the Buddha's law of truth,
Ere yet the wiles of lust and wrath
Beguiled men from the Noble Path,
And ignorance of sins, the worst
With which the race of man is cursed:
*When white men reign*
*Thy glories wane,*
*Yet blaze again*
*While yet they reign.*

High honour to our Sikkè Min,
Who purged away the stain of sin.
Now radiant as a mass of gold,
The temple glitters as of old;
Ten thousand districts chant his name,
The Sekyah systems vaunt his fame,
High winner of the holy rest.
Thrice is the benefactor blessed.
For him the last of lives is run
The ferry past and Neh'ban won.
Great guerdon gains such gift as this,
A sainted name, eternal bliss,
On earth renown will live for aye,
Beyond ne'er more to breathe a sigh.
Whenas the sacred work was wrought
The Tha-gyah Min came down unsought,
Sweet music breathed from angel bands
And Dewas sped the workers' hands,
A nimbus shone around the spire
And gleamed each gem with holy fire,
As though on high in lucent coil
The sacred hair smiled on the toil,
And once again in hermit guise
The Buddha Prince blessed the emprise.

Hast seen the lotus-bud in prayer
Fold fervent leaves; with odours rare
Invoke the Buddha's gracious power
To save mankind in danger's hour?
Hast seen the pohn-gyee's garb of peace,
The golden robe, strong to release

The suppliant from endless strife,
Unceasing change, the pains of life?
So prayerful stands the holy fane,
So new-born gleams in golden grain;
And calmly sleep the hairs divine,
Meet relic for so fair a shrine;
And hither on the holy day
From far and near men wend their way
And kneeling pray that they may gain
Release from fitful change and pain.
Ah, Saviour Buddha, hear them call
And grant the long, last life to all.

High striving to the upper air,
Great convent of the Sacred Hair,
Thou'st stood upon the foreland's brow
From misty ages e'en till now.
The Budh himself, with his own mouth,
Stood on this hill, and, looking south,
Foretold that on this spot should stand
A fane far-famed in farthest land;
And hither came the brethren twain
And reared with stone of precious vein
A lordly pile and gilt it o'er
And many a monarch added store,
Till last of all our Sikkè came
And joined to theirs a pious name.
From youngest years till hoarest hours,
Peguans all, great fame is ours;
Two Henthas dwelt here, male and mate,
Ten thousand kings kept regal state,
And ever till the kalpas end
Will pious pilgrims hither wend.
Ah, Sikkè, great reward is thine,
Thy fame doth last while lasts the shrine
And ere the shrine falls, falls the world.

Pegu was the capital of the Talaing kingdom of Hanthawadee. Shin Gautama foretold that it would be founded in the 1116th year of his religion, and gave two of his hairs to two brothers, Mahah Thala and Soola Thala, to enshrine on the Thoodathana Myintheela Hill. A pagoda fifty cubits high was erected over them, and this was the original of the Shway Maw (or Hmaw) -daw Payah.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE LEGEND OF THE RANGOON PAGODA

AT the end of the last world-period five lotus-buds sprang up on the Thehngoottara Hill, where now the Shway Dagohn pagoda stands. They opened their leaves and disclosed each of them within its chalice a thengan, the holy yellow robe of the monastic brethren. Then a huge bird settled on the top of the hill and laid an egg, and from this was presently hatched the kala-waik, the carrying bird of Vishnu, which seized the sacred garments and flew up to the heavens. This was an omen foretelling the appearance of five Buddhas in the present world cycle, and accordingly the universe which had existed in the preceding kalpa was shortly afterwards destroyed, with Mount Meru, the enclosing Set-ya-wala hills, the six heavens of the nat-dewas, and many of the lower seats of Byammahs. Then followed myriads of years of chaos; then myriads more while the present world called Badda was being constructed atom by atom, and at last the earth was ready and prepared to receive the first Buddha, Kaukkathan. He left his staff on the Thehngoottara Hill; his successor Gawnagohng deposited his water-filter beside it, and the third Buddha, Kathapa, added a portion of his robe.

In the time of the fourth Buddha, Gautama, there lived on the Thehngoottara Hill, a gigantic scorpion, so huge that it devoured every day an elephant, and the tusks of its many victims were set up in a great ring fence round about its den. One day seven foreign ships passed along the coast. The sailors saw the white glimmer of the ivory from far out at sea, and landed to ascertain what it was. They began loading their ships with the precious treasure; and were working

their hardest, when suddenly they saw the giant scorpion coming straight at them. They rushed on board, cut their cables, and stood out to sea. But here a new danger awaited them. A monster crab reared two gigantic claws out of the waters and threatened to crush anything that passed between. But there was no retreat, and, overwhelmed with terror, they drove before the wind. The vessels just managed to pass through without touching the claws with their yards or masts; but the scorpion, following in hot pursuit, rushed up against both pincers with its bulky body, and they closed in an instant, crushing and rending the monstrous prey. The crab itself died of the poisonous food, and the neighbourhood of the holy hill was thus freed from its terrors.

Not long afterwards another ship sailed in these waters. Near Twantay, a town about twenty miles from the present capital of British Burma, lived a pious Talaing merchant, who had two sons named Poo, or dove, and Tapaw, or plenty. These young men heard that there was a famine in the western lands, and set sail thither with a shipload of rice. They landed at the mouth of the Ganges, and having procured five hundred waggons, loaded them with their grain and travelled into the Waythalee country. There one day their waggons were suddenly arrested, and as it were chained to the earth. While they were seeking for the cause, a nat, who in a previous existence had been their mother, appeared to them and asked: "Desire ye store of gold and precious things, or rather desire ye heavenly treasure?" They answered, "Heavenly treasure." Thereupon the nat bade them go to where Shin Gautama, the embryo Buddha, was sitting beneath the yaza-yatana tree in the seventh period of seven days' meditation, which immediately preceded his becoming perfect. They laid a sack of rice reverently at his feet, and in return received four hairs each. The Buddha renamed them Tapoht-tha and Paleeka, and enjoined them to deposit the hairs on the Thehngoottara Hill, beside the relics of the three preceding Budhs. The place was to be determined by the "takoon," a felled wood-oil tree "lying athwart," so that neither the top nor the roots touched the ground.

The brothers, happy in the possession of such inestimable relics, enclosed them in a golden casket, hastened back

to their ship and set sail. But they visited many a distant shore without gaining any tidings of the whereabouts of the Thehngoottara mount. In vain they besought the nats, the beeloos, and yekkathas, good genii, ogres, and demons, of whom there were many upon earth in those days. The spirits knew no more than the men. At last the king of the Tha-gyahs took pity upon them, came down from the heavens, and appearing before the seekers in the guise of a nat, told them to return to their own native land. There, not far from their birthplace, Twantay, was the hill they sought for, and the only being who could point it out to them was the guardian spirit of the hill, the aged Soolay nat. But this guardian nat had lived so long upon earth that his eyelids had become weak and heavy and had fallen together, so that he was stone blind. Before he could help them at all it would be necessary to restore to him his eyesight, and this could only be done by hoisting up his eyelids with two great wooden props. The Soolay nat was of gigantic stature, and the two brothers sought about in the forest for the tallest oil-palms they could find, cut them down, lopped them into shape, and then went out in quest of the aged guardian spirit. At length they found him, so thickly covered with ancient moss and lichens that it was difficult to recognise a living creature in him. When he was asked where the Thehngoottara Hill lay he became suspicious, and brought forward his blindness as an excuse for not being able to indicate its situation. But the two brothers were prepared with their remedy. They got their two great beams into position, and after much trouble managed to hoist up his heavy lids so far that the light fell in a narrow streak on his pupils. Soolay then indicated with a wave of his hand in what direction they were to go, and Tapoht-tha and Paleeka set off again on their search. But here they encountered a new difficulty. Instead of one hill they found three, with a lake in the middle of them, and there was nothing to show where the staff, the filter, and the bathing robe of the previous three Budhs lay buried. They were in despair, but the king of the Tha-gyahs again came to their aid. He descended with his subject dewahs during the night and united the three peaks into one. The next day the brothers felled the

tree on the summit and it fulfilled the required conditions. "It remained poised on its centre on the peak. Its top touched not the ground, and its root touched not the ground. Therefore the place was called in the Mohn language, Takoon." A pagoda was built twenty-seven feet high, and all the land round about on which its shadow fell between sunrise and sunset was consecrated to it for ever. The dewah king prepared a golden boat to hold the casket containing the hairs, and this vessel circled about perpetually on the lake, and was protected by water-wheels, whose spokes were prolonged into great swords and knives that struck out in all directions and turned without ceasing, except for a moment at mid-day, when they halted for the space of time during which a woman might draw out a thread from her spinning-loom.

Long after, the royal elder brother of China, King Oodibwa, during his wars with the Burmans, was exceedingly anxious to carry off the sacred relics which are deposited in the Rangoon shrine. He prepared a magic figure in human form and despatched it to steal the Budhs' remains. The creature crawled all the way down the Irrawaddy on its stomach until it arrived at the suburb of Rangoon called Kemindine ("the looking-post"). There it raised its head to look for a moment, and was so overcome by the splendour of the shrine that it delayed too long, and when at length it stretched out its hands to steal the relics, the favourable moment at noon was passed, and the whirling swords cut it in pieces. Since then the whole of the treasures have been walled up in the relic-chamber, whence nothing but the entire destruction of the payah could remove them. The marvellous wealth of the shrine has been a fruitful source of wonder and speculation to many. Nevertheless the statement of Sonnerat that the spire, which has now risen to a height of nearly 370 feet, has a narrow funnel, descending from the top down to the basement, and that down this shaft princes, rich men and the religious of all nations, cast gold and silver and precious stones, has a foundation only in the imagination of the Gallic writer. The crown or "umbrella" at the top is known to be crusted thick on the upper ring with precious stones, and from it hang scores of

jewelled gold bells, placed there in recent times, but to the mysterious relic-chamber no one has penetrated for hundreds of years, nor probably ever will. Neither the shrine itself, nor the relics, nor the images, are the objects of the adoration of the pious. The Burman, it cannot be too much urged, is not an idolater. He worships neither relic nor image. The pagoda and the figure only supply him with a seemly place to utter the praises of the great Buddha, and to form resolutions to imitate, as far as he can, the charity and the sinless life of the great model.

# CHAPTER XVII

## IMAGES

THERE are few things which more irritate an educated Burman than to assert, or as most English do, calmly assume, that the Burmese are idolaters. The national idea is that idol-worship is especially the characteristic of the lowest savage tribes, and even fetichism is considered a superior faith. Therefore the accusation of bowing down to stocks and stones is intolerable, and the implication is combated with feverish energy. Where there are no prayers, in the technical sense of the word, there can be no idolatry. No one, not even Shin Gautama himself, can help a man in his strivings to lead a holy life. None but the individual in his own person can work out his special salvation, and he tries to do so by setting a splendid ideal before his mind. The words uttered before the impassive features of the Budh are not a supplication for mercy or aid, but the praises of the great Lord himself, through the contemplation of whose triumphant victory over passions and ignorance the most sinful may be led to a better state.

There is no Supreme Being; the Buddha himself, who even while he was on earth was no more than a perfect, sinless man, no longer exists to make intercession, were there any such power to which one might appeal. The only thing to be done is to praise, and in praising to strive to imitate, and through imitation to attain to the perfect knowledge, and so to the final deliverance, the exemption from the four burdens of heaviness, age, sickness, and death, which is the restful absorption of Neh'ban.

The worshippers of all creeds have always sought for a

special place wherein to pay their devotions. The Burman erects a pagoda over sacred relics, and puts up an image of the great Lord of Truth there, not to worship, but to afford a means to the pious of localising their feelings and concentrating their thoughts on the supreme model. The candles and smoky oil lamps, the fruits and flowers offered on the shrine, are no more signs of idolatry than the offertory bag placed on the altar by the Christian priest. The Yatana Kalapa is perfectly distinct on this point. Under the heading U'bhato Kotito Panha, we find it written, "It is bootless to worship the Buddha; nothing is necessary but to revere him and the memory of him. Statues are only useful in so far as they refresh the memory; for as the farmer sows the seed and gathers in the grain in due season, so will the man who trusts in the Buddha and holds fast by his sacred Law obtain the deliverance and pass into Neh'ban. The earth and the Buddha are alike in themselves inert."

There is thus no doubt left as to what the great master and his interpreters intended. The worship of the payah is nothing more than a simulation of the devotion which would be paid to Shin Gautama were he still upon earth. The Buddha is admired, he is lauded, he is tenderly loved; and this devotion is extended to the figures which are erected in remembrance of him, in recognition of his blameless life, the supreme wisdom which enabled him to teach the Law, and the great compassion and benevolence with which he regarded all living things. The characteristics of a Budh are the exercise of the Three Great Works of Perfection, the constant practising of the Ten Great Virtues, and the Five Renouncings; and to attain the deliverance all must diligently strive to observe these. The Three Great Works of Perfection are:—

1. Assistance afforded to parents and relations.

2. Great offerings made in this and previous existences, coupled with the strict observance of the different enactments of the Law.

3. Benevolent dispositions towards all beings indiscriminately.

The Ten Great Virtues are:—liberality; observance of the precepts of the Law; retreat into lonely places; diligence;

patience; fortitude; wisdom; benevolence; truthfulness; indifference.

The Five Renouncings are the giving up, for holiness' sake, of—children; wife; goods; life; one's self.

This cannot all be effected in one existence, unless piety has been exhibited in many previous lives. Much depends on one's kan, the accumulation of merits from past time. Just as the fruits on a tree are some of them good, some bad, but have little or nothing in common with each other, or with those that went before, or may come after, so it is with a man's kan. But the diligent observance of the holy precepts, and especially the exercise of open-handed charity, will always tend to reduce the number of lives to be endured before the deliverance comes.

Prayer there is none in the technical sense of the word, and the doxologies repeated at the shrines are mostly those learnt in childhood at the monastery school, or special compositions of each individual for himself. There is nothing laid down in any of the Buddhist religious books concerning the formulæ of prayer. Whatever there is, is taken from the A-pyin Oung-gyin, the record of the triumph of Shin Gautama over the outer foes, Mahn-nat, the spirit of evil, and his daughters, and the A-twin Oung-gyin, the triumph over the inward foes, the keelaythah, the passions of mankind. Many, however, repeat little more than the tharana-gohng, the form with which the pohn-gyees almost invariably commence worship: "I worship the Buddha; I worship the Law; I worship the Assembly." This, with the aneh'sah, dohkka, anatta, "change, pain, illusion," forms the sentence to be repeated on the rosary. A very usual form of doxology commonly taught to the scholars in the kyoungs, and therefore retained through life, is the following:—"Awgatha, Awgatha, I worship with the body, with the mouth, and with the mind, with these three kans. The first, the second, the third; once, twice, until three times. The Lord, the precious one; the Law, the precious one; the Assembly, the precious one; these three precious things. I, the worshipper, most humbly, with fervid zeal, with clasped hands, pay reverence, give offerings, and with pious gaze bow me down. Thus by this worshipping I gain merit and

increase in earnestness and purity of heart, and am freed from the Four States of Punishment; from the Three Evil Things, starvation, plague, and warfare; from the Eight Chambers of Hell; and from the Five Enemies. And at the end, when the last existence has come for me, may I pass into Neh'ban."

Such "prayers" are addressed not merely to the image, but to the whole pagoda, and not even on the platform of the latter. It is common for the pious at any period of the day to repeat their devotions simply in the direction of the pagoda, and often from a spot where hardly even the summit of it can be seen. The pilgrims to the Shway Dagohn Payah in Rangoon prostrate themselves at intervals from the moment they catch sight of its glittering spire; but they repeat nothing further than the above, or some more fanciful formula, such as this: "Awgatha, Awgatha, Awgatha, I worship the footsteps of the great, the brilliant Buddha, to whom even the savage hunters turn, and the fierce dragons on the mountain tops and in the abysses of the hills. In the far land of Theeho (Ceylon) there, where, in the wilderness of woods, far from human dwellings, temples and pagodas rise up 84,000 in number, in the caves and the deeps; there I worship, there I bow me in devotion." By far the greater number, however, repeat simple Pali sentences, of which they have long forgotten the meaning, if indeed they ever knew it. Many of the pyin-sin can repeat whole books and chapters in the sacred tongue, without having any but a very confused notion of the meaning of what they utter. Yet even this parrot-like performance has its merit, for it brings the mind into a fit state to contemplate the great ideal. A conclusive proof of this is recorded in the Malla Lingaya Woottoo, the life of Shin Gautama. There were many bats who lived in a cave in the time of the last Buddha, Kathapa, and great numbers of yahans were in the habit of resorting to this cave to meditate and give themselves up to devotion. These bats learned to repeat some of the phrases which they heard, but could not understand, and this pious exercise resulted in such benefit to their kan, that on their death they migrated to the seats of nat-dewahs. Afterwards, when Shin Gautama was preaching upon earth, they again appeared upon the

seat of man as yahans, and, attending diligently to the precepts of the Law, were the first, as disciples of Tharipootra, one of the chief followers of the Buddha, to comprehend the sublime law of the Abeedamma. If dumb creatures then can win such rewards for piety, how much more a man who repeats his sentences with at least a consciousness of what their import is.

Similar to this feeling with regard to the Pali jargon, of which every Burman knows more or less, according to the length of his stay in the monastery or the depth of his religious sentiments, and prompted by a like idea, is the offering of little nan-tagohn. These prayer-flags—kyet-shateing, as they are sometimes called—are made of paper, cut fancifully into figures of dragons, lizards, and the like, with embroidery-work round their edges. In the centre is written some pious reflection or aspiration, and the offerer places it on the shrine. Most of those sold ready composed for the worshipper, are in Pali, those which he writes for himself, in Burmese. Samples of these inscriptions are :—

"By means of this paper the offerer will become very strong."

"By the merit of this paper Wednesday's children will be blessed by spirits and men."

"May the man born on Friday gain reward for his pious offering."

"This paper is an offering for people born on any day of the week from Sunday to Saturday."

"May the man born on Monday be freed from sickness and from the Three Calamities."

Very often nothing but the names of certain days of the week are written on the nan-tagohn ; but sometimes a friend of humanity, or a man with a particularly large family, covering with their birthdays the whole week, simply writes down the names of the days in any order he pleases. The commonest form at the stalls round about the Shway Dagohn is this simple, bald list, and indeed Rangoon is particularly badly supplied in this way. There are other small flags or streamers made of coloured cloth, some of them, especially those presented by the Shans, stitched with

many plies until they stand out quite stiff. Others again are made of varnished strips of zinc. These have nothing written on them, and stand simply for the advancement in piety of their offerers, as do the candles representing the various nan, the animals which stand for the days of the week. Other offerings are flowers, single or arranged in bouquets, and almost invariably distinguished by the heavy sweetness of their odour. Candles and tapers, of all sizes and styles of manufacture, abound; some a couple of feet high, or occasionally much more, made of long, narrow coloured tapers, plaited together over an ordinary solid one, some plain white, others coloured all the hues of the rainbow, European manufactured sperm or paraffin articles, and home-made tapers of the crudest style of dip. Side by side with these are placed smoky oil-lamps, consisting of a little flat saucer full of oil, with a wick composed of a bit of cloth or a few threads of cotton roughly twisted together. The candles are simply softened with a match at the bottom and made to stick on the ledges in front of or round about the figures of the Buddha. Incense sticks and scented wood are often burnt on stone altars erected specially for such fire offerings.

The worshippers, if they are men, squat down, neither kneeling nor sitting down, but resting the body on their heels as miners who are accustomed to low workings do. The body is bent a little forward, and the hands are joined together and raised to the forehead. The women kneel down altogether, and for this reason take especial care to cover up their feet, sometimes getting a friend to tuck their skirts over them. All are of course barefooted. The sandals are removed always at the foot of the pagoda steps, though these may begin in some places many hundred yards away from the shrine. Before commencing the repetition of the formulæ, three prostrations are made with the forehead to the ground, and the same is repeated at the close, and on rising to depart you must turn to the right. It is usual to hold some offering between the hands during worship—a prayer-flag, a flower, or something of the kind—and this is afterwards reverently deposited on the altar. A favourite offering, instead of real flowers, is pouk-pouk. This is the

variety of rice known as kouk hnyin, fired dry on a pan. It swells up and cracks open, and the grains are then dyed red, green, or yellow, while some are left plain white. The resemblance to flowers or flower-leaves at a distance is sufficiently striking. It is a work of merit to go about lighting tapers and candles which have blown out, or lamps which have got choked up, watering flowers, and so on.

The statues of Shin Gautama, then, are only his visible representatives to keep alive in the hearts of his flock feelings of love and adoration, and gratitude to the great Master who strove so long to teach the Law, and was ever so pitiful towards earthly suffering. Like the Egyptians, Buddhists have large images, but stand diametrically opposed to them in the way in which they regard them. All the Egyptian's energies were directed to conquering the hostile powers of nature. He sought with anxious care to preserve the mummy in the recesses of huge mountains of stone, in order that the soul returning after the period of 5000 years might enter again its old home. He built for eternity, and hoped to defy decay and outlast the world. The Buddhist laughs at this notion, seeing that for him the stream of time levels and carries off every existence with it. The rising again of spirits has for him nothing but a suggestion of devilish arts. The idea raises in his mind a threatening of evil, as well to the living as to the disembodied spirit. Instead therefore of devising any such uncanny measures for the preservation of the corpse, he strives rather to destroy it as soon as may be on the funeral pyre, or even to blow it into small atoms with fireworks and bombs. Similarly, his images are made of mouldering brick. Where is the use of laboriously carving figures in the hardest stone, when the most indestructible of them could only last for a time, which is but as a ripple in the stream of eternity? Therefore the marble and brass Gautamas are but few compared with those of brick and mortar, or wood, and the crumbling away and rotting of these is viewed with the utmost equanimity. There will always be piety enough to keep the tazoung full until the cycles end.

The popular division of the Gautamas is into the classes of standing, sitting, and lying. This is somewhat crude, but

it is perpetuated by a curious notion that though a man may present all three kinds of images, he must do so in a special order: the standing first, then the sitting, and last the lying down. As many as one pleases of one style may be presented, but you must not reverse the order: one dare not go backwards. The vast majority of images represent the master in the cross-legged attitude in which he attained the Buddhaship, seated under the bawdee tree. This sitting figure is called Tin-myin-kway. The left hand lies palm upwards in the lap; the right hangs over the knee. The ears reach to the shoulder, and the face is calm and passionless. On the top of the head is a little knob or point like a young. This is called the manee-daw, and represents the hair which Prince Theiddat cut off with his sword when he first put on the yellow robe. It was left a quarter of an inch long, and never grew again. In attaining to the supreme wisdom, the Prince attained to the Neh'ban, or annihilation of the passions.

Less common are the Shin-bin-thah-young, the recumbent figures representing the Budh as he died and attained to the Neh'ban of earthly existence, reclining between the two sahl-trees. He lies on his right side, and is often represented with numbers of his lamenting disciples ranged around the couch. To these are not uncommonly added circles of the kings of the earth and the heavens, beeloos, galohns, nats, yekkathas, and a variety of other creatures. The figures of the latter often display some artistic skill in the modelling and the expression of the features, which it is impossible to show in the placid countenance of the teacher himself. The Shin-bin-thah-young very often have the emblems of the Shway-zet-daw carved on the soles of the feet.

Finally there is the Mat-tat-kodaw, or erect image, also called Mat-yat-daw, where the master is represented in the attitude of preaching, the right hand elevated, but still with the same calm, unmoved visage. These Mat-yat-daw are usually very large, and are far more common in the temples of Upper Burma than in the bell-pagodas of the low country. They are often Sapoopatee Payah, representing the Budh as a king with crown on head and the royal wings on arms and

thighs. They are usually very large, like the recumbent figure. The standing figures in the Ananda at Pagahn must be over forty feet in height, and form a very impressive sight. Light sufficient to illuminate the whole figure cannot be admitted at the comparatively low gateways of the shrine. Cunning architects have therefore cut slits far up in the chapel roof, and a narrow stream of light falls full on the gilded face of the Buddha. The effect is most solemn and awe-inspiring. The devotee passes through long dim corridors, where his foot falls soft on the mouldy pavement, and the smell is as of a charnel-house, and there is silence throughout the whole vast temple, broken fitfully by the eerie chant of a fellow-worshipper far away through the passages, and suddenly he comes on the chapel and sees before him the sad tranquil face, with a glory shed over it, and the hand stretched out as if in warning or benediction. One can then understand how it is that many of the ignorant and uninstructed do actually worship the Gautama as if it were an idol, and the Englishman involuntarily takes off his hat as he enters the sanctuary.

The statues in the great lonely fanes at Pagahn are certainly far more impressive than those in the smaller but more gaily-decked-out niche-shrines of the solid pyramidal pagodas of Lower Burma. The four great Mat-yat-daw in the Ananda Payah represent the four great Buddhas of this world-cycle. Kauk-kathan, as the first law-giver, is placed in the east; Gawnagohng in the southern image chamber; Kathapa to the west, and the Buddha of the present religious period in the northern shrine. Kauk-kathan is made of the sweet-scented dan-ta-goo tree; Gawnagohng of jasmine wood; Kathapa of brass, and Gautama of fir; but they have all been covered with plaster and gilt, and the material of which they are made is only known by tradition. An especially favourite figure to represent standing is Deebinkayah Payah, the fourth of the twenty-eight Buddhas whose names are recorded as appearing in successively destroyed worlds. It was this Buddha, the "Light-bringer," who first announced to Shin Gautama that he, then a fervent yahan, would hereafter, after many worlds, attain the supreme wisdom.

The temples of Pagahn and other places in the upper

territory are built specially for the reception of great images, and as the public zeal is concentrated on these, there are comparatively few surplus figures, and these mostly scattered along the sides of the dim corridors. In Lower Burma, however, where the sacred buildings are more particularly relic shrines, the images are more of an adjunct to the payah, and there is a most extraordinary multiplication of them. In each of the four image chambers round the base of the pagoda, besides the chief figure there are numbers of other Buddhas of all sizes, and these overflow into dozens of tazoungs, or image houses, all round about the central payah. This reserve stock is due to the unceasing desire for koothoh. If a man cannot build a pagoda, or has not money enough to erect a monastery or a rest-house, there is at any rate no one so poor but he can gain merit by dedicating a Gautama; and so images of brass and marble, plaster and wood, and sun-dried clay, flow in a never-ending stream to the great district shrines. There has long ceased to be any room for them except in the image-houses, and there they remain, but seldom visited by any but the very religious, and gradually becoming grimed and mouldy with age, notwithstanding the Yay-thohn-pwè, at the new year, when the women come and wash them down. It is a maxim that devotions may and ought to be repeated before every image, but it is not often that a worshipper is seen in the tazoungs, and the offerings of candles and incense sticks, flowers, and pouk-pouk san-pan, are few and far between. Nevertheless the houses are crammed with figures of all sizes, from huge ten feet high Sagaing marbles down to little clay painted and gilt specimens that you can put in your pocket, and that idolatry-detesting Britishers often do so serve and afterwards exhibit as having actually "been worshipped." Big and small, they are crowded together as close as they can be, the small ones reposing in the hand or the lap, or round about the sides of their bigger facsimiles. Sometimes, as is the case in a great long building at the Kyaik-than-lan Payah at Maulmein, the centre is occupied by a gigantic recumbent figure, the tin-myin-kway being placed in orderly array all round the sides facing the central dying Budh. Sometimes the figures stand side by side on steps rising one

above the other with a small open space in the middle. The halls are always quite full, the most recently erected being apparently just spacious enough to hold all the images ready to put into it.

Few statues stand unprotected in the open. At Kyouk-ta-ran, on the Irrawaddy a few miles below Prome, there are a number of Gautamas cut out of the rocky face of a bluff overhanging the river. The ridge is about eighty feet high altogether, and the figures are thirty feet above the level of the water. They are all honestly cut out of the rock, and not, as some people think, simply brick and plaster erections —an idea induced by the habit of painting them white, or covering them with gold-leaf, occasionally indulged in by people anxious of bettering their chance towards a new existence. There are about fifty of them altogether, varying very considerably in size, some being very large. A similar work may be seen on the hill-side above Sagaing, opposite Ava. There the Buddhas, each in his separate niche, are carved at regular intervals, and the rock face sweeps round in a segment of a circle, the platform in front being strongly built up with a masonry revetment.

On the opposite side of the river, near the village of Sa-gyeen-wah, formerly a suburb of the old capital, Amara-poora, is a gigantic sedent figure built perfectly open and uncovered. It is situated close to the half-mile-long wooden bridge which crosses the lagoon there, and the Budh gazes across the waters with eternal meditative smile. Round about are ranged double and treble circles of pigmy Zaydee-yan, over which it towers to a height of ninety feet or more. The neighbourhood is practically deserted now that Mandalay has become the capital. There are almost no worshippers of the giant Buddha except the small colony of monks from the kyoung hard by. The birds will drop seeds between the crevices of the bricks and plaster, and another decade will probably see the great image torn out of all possibility of recognition.

Such a phenomenon actually does exist near the ancient Pegu town of Zaing-ga-naing, on the opposite side of the river from the capital of the old Peguan kings. One of the singular pyramidal limestone rocks, common in the Tenas-

serim Province, has been built with the aid of bricks into the form of an enormous Gautama. On the top of the head, glinting white through the trees, appears the slender spire of a small pagoda. The jungle growth has spread all over the hill, or image, and the outline and features of the Budh struggle to be seen through a heavy fog of varied green. Such monster images exist here and there all over the Eastern districts. They are all exceedingly ancient, and are regarded more as glorifications of the Great Master than as recognised places for devotion. The pious deposit offerings and chant their sentences before them as they do everywhere before the features of the Buddha, but otherwise the people regard them more with the curiosity of the foreigner than with the adoration of the devotee.

Among the more ignorant and superstitious classes it is not at all uncommon to find particular images regarded with especial awe and reverence, on account of the tale of some prodigy displayed. The sacred order and all *true* Buddhists, however, strenuously discountenance the idea of any miracles being wrought either by particular images or by holy relics. It is for this reason that the latter are in Burma all walled up and not brought out for the inspection of worshippers as in other Buddhist countries. The Kamma-wah-sah in its denunciation of the claiming of magic powers is also considered to forbid the assertion that any particular statue displays more than usual power—a power which could not fail to lead directly to idolatry. The passage runs as follows: "No brother must arrogate to himself what goes beyond the power of human nature, and he must not boast of exceptional abilities. Whoso gives out with evil intentions that he possesses supernatural powers, saying that he has attained zahn, or neh'ban, or command of religion, or undisturbed repose on the path that leads to the deliverance; he is no Sramana; he is no son of Sakya. As a broken palm-tree cannot be again united, as a twig broken from the stem cannot be joined on again, so is that religious man, who falsely declares that he has attained the superhuman, fallen away from the true Sramanas, separated from the sons of Sakya. So long as life lasts must this be avoided."

Nevertheless unprincipled yahans, fearing that the piety

of their district is growing slack, or wishing to attract benevolent pilgrims to their neighbourhood, undoubtedly do occasionally originate, or at any rate stimulate, the belief in prodigies. A common wonder is that of the Tat-daw pwah, growing images. I am not aware that they are made of meteoric stones or any such substance. The carnal and unregenerate are wont to assert that these images only grow at night and then in sudden jumps. In any case, they never grow very big.

A more unusual miraculous discovery actually resulted in the growth of a small fishing village into a prosperous town, and, owing to this latter circumstance, into the head of one of the subdivisions under the British Government. This is the station of Myan-oung on the Irrawaddy. A Gautama rose out of the ground there. That was, however, not the wonder. It perspired! It perspired a thick, sticky exudation which precluded the necessity of using the milky juice of the tha-pan thee (*Ficus racemosa*), the gum usually employed in fixing gold-leaf on the images or pagodas. The tidings soon spread far and wide, and people journeyed from distant towns to see the wonder and to plaster on fabulous quantities of gold-leaf. The hamlet rapidly grew into a town. The surrounding country was taken up and cultivated, and Myan-oung is now as pretty a little station as any you will see on the great Irrawaddy, and is one of the principal centres of the great Henzadah district.

Another little fishing village, farther down the river, below Maoobin, possessed in 1879 a singular image. This Buddha in most unusual fashion suddenly began to develop a moustache. It was not much to speak of, and was certainly not pretty, but there was undoubtedly a growth of some kind on the upper lip. The phenomenon, however, never had more than an exceedingly local interest. A moustache is not an appendage that appeals to a Burman's finer feelings to any great extent, and if Shin Gautama had one in life he would certainly have shaved it off. Therefore the swampy, mosquito-haunted district failed to better its fortunes. A good many people came and gazed on the ugly bristles and made offerings, but they went away again, and the enthusiasm was strangled before it was well born. The military extra

assistant commissioner of the district declared in an off-hand way that it was a fungus of a new kind, or some hitherto undiscovered lichen, and had thoughts of chipping a bit of the lip off and sending it to the British Museum. But he refrained, and the villagers missed even this poor chance of notoriety.

There are a few images specially noteworthy with less questionable reason. One of these stands half way up Mandalay Hill under a lofty teak tectum. It is a gigantic standing image profusely gilt all over, and pointing with steadfast finger full at the glittering central spire of the palace rising gracefully over the throne of the Ruler of Existence. As a half-way house on the toilsome ascent of the hill it is always frequented, but the superstitious way-farers gaze through the gilt railings more with the awe due to the guardian spirit of the capital than with the fervency of the worshipper. It has been burnt since the annexation.

In the chapel on the summit of the hill, looking over the wide, fertile plain towards the black, jagged Nat's Peak, haunted by goblins and wraiths, the silver windings of the mighty Irrawaddy and the barren pagoda-sprinkled Sagaing hills beyond, there is a singular statue. A notice begs the religious to put their gold-leaf, not indiscriminately all over the figure, but only on the eyeballs. The zeal of many years causes the pupils to start from their sockets as if the Buddha were horrified by some gruesome deed of sin perpetrated in the golden city below. The last time I was there I heard a matter-of-fact Briton marvelling how it was that the goodly nuggets had not long since been removed by a sacrilegious hand. It seems to be always Englishmen who think of these things first.

A hundred yards from the foot of the sacred hill in a tall brick building is a great marble Buddha, probably the biggest monolith in the world. The sitting figure must be quite twenty-five feet high, and scores of tons weight. It does the Mandalay workmen great credit that with their primitive appliances they should have been able to mount so ponderous a figure on its pedestal. In a wide square round about are arranged little six-foot shrines, each containing a gilt image and all looking towards the central Buddha.

It is not the least wonderful of the many wonderful things to be seen round the foot of Mandalay Hill.

The casting of a brass image is a public festival, and the scene of general rejoicing. The people gather from miles round about, and there are plays and feastings for several nights, whether the Buddha is presented by an individual or by public subscription. The whole assemblage takes an interest in the proceedings, and rejoices in proportion to the success of the casting, which is effected in the same way as with bells. When the image is finished and ready to be dedicated, a great procession is formed; a band of music and dancers go at the head; the most wealthy men deem it an honour to be allowed to bear a hand in carrying the statue; men, women, and children from all the surrounding country, dressed in their gayest clothes, follow on foot or in brightly decorated bullock-carts to the bottom of the pagoda steps. Then the Buddha is carried up and solemnly deposited in the allotted place, myatta-thappè, in religious phraseology, a term not to be rendered without many words in English. It includes all the meanings of seemliness, dignity, beauty, splendour, and awe-compelling majesty. The ritual of the monks at the consecration of an image is, as in the case of the dedication of a pagoda, vague, and decided by individual opinion. Such a formal presentation service is called Nay-ka-zah, and is declared by the Soola-gandee sect to be superfluous. The lineaments of the Budh are worthy of honour wherever seen, at the pagoda or in the workman's shop.

The figures of Shin Gautama are not in themselves by any means handsome as works of art. The national skill in wood-carving is well known, and the little wooden lay figures made at Henzadah and other places are remarkably clever in their variety of expression. None of this skill appears in the religious images. The modeller or sculptor is held fast by ancient custom. He must make his image of a particular pattern and with the recognised expression. The object is to portray the death of all human passions and earthly feelings. The calm, eternal sleep-like smile symbolises the attainment of neh'ban, the cessation of being, the end of the cycles of transincorporation of souls. This

is all that is intended to be represented, and it is held out as a hope to the struggling sinner among earthly miseries. The model to be followed would be worthless did the face express the hopes and fears and pleasures of wretched mortality.

The following triumphal song is taken from the same play of Sawpay Sawmay as the chant in celebration of the gilding of the Pegu pagoda, and is set to the same Yohdaya nan-thehn than. The Mahah Myat-munee is the "Arakan Pagoda" in Mandalay.

### ON THE IMAGE PRESENTED BY THE PEGU INSPECTOR TO THE MAHAH MYAT-MUNEE

Fair springs the sun at dawning
From out the forest's green,
The nine gems on his nat-front
Shine gloriously at e'en.

The rainbow weaves nat-raiment,
Sweet is the lily's breath,
The malla flower is winsome,
That weeps the Saddan's[1] death.

But fairer is the image
That Hanthawadee sends,
Amid its gold and silver
The pearl with ruby blends.

The maiden from her finger
Drew off her jewelled rings,
The men brought costly diamonds
And wealth of precious things,

And as 'mid shouts and clangour
The flames leapt red as gold
All joyous cast their treasures
Into the hissing mould.

So high hath Buddha honour
In Hanthawadee's soil,
So gladly seek believers
Release from earthly toil.

[1] The Saddan is the White Elephant, the last incarnation of Shin Gautama before he was conceived in Queen Maia's womb.

First great Sandathooreeya[1]
The Master's features wrought,
He sought the Budh's permission,
Nor failed in what he sought.

And I, the poor Inspector,
Fired by as holy zeal,
Present a copied image
And trust for equal weal.

That 'tis a precious alms-gift
Great prodigies attest,
The Buddha's six-fold glory
Gleams nightly on its crest,

And whenas it was casting
Byammahs and nats untold
Came down and cast rich offerings
Into the holy mould.

Yea, myriads of all creatures
From every earthly seat
Rejoicing cast their alms-gifts
Before the Buddha's feet.

With close-clasped hands men bowed them,
With fervent minds they prayed,
That Buddha some great token
Might grant them for their aid.

Then from the lordly image,
Aglow with brilliant light,
There streamed both fire and water
Upon their dazzled sight,

And diamond rays and ruby,
The Six great Glories blaze,
The Buddha's Nine great Splendours
Blind their adoring gaze.

There's many a goodly image
In Mahah Myat-munee,
But Mamyay[2] shall be aged
Ere it a fairer see.

[1] The King Sandathooreeya, while the Buddha was yet alive, obtained his permission to make a statue of him. This image is the great twelve-foot high brass Tin-myin-kway, now the chief centre of worship in the Mahah Myat-munee shrine.

[2] Mamyay is a common poetical contraction for Mandalay. Man is also frequently used.

And I, the great Inspector,
May lay me down in peace,
For when this life is ended
Existences shall cease.

It is a very usual practice at the casting of bells and images for the onlookers to throw gold and silver articles of jewellery into the ladles of melted ore.

# CHAPTER XVIII

## BELLS

"THIS Bell is made by Koo-na-lin-gala, the priest—and weight 600 viss. No one body design to destroy this Bell. Maulmein, March 30th, 1855. He who destroyed to this Bell, they must be in the great Heell, and unable to coming out."

This inscription runs round the rim of the great bell at the Kyaik-than-lan pagoda at Maulmein. It is hardly a fiftieth part of the Mahah Ganda at Rangoon, which, in turn, is a great deal smaller than the huge monster at Mengohn, near Mandalay; but it is noticeable as being the only bell in Burma, as far as I am aware, which has an English inscription on it. The circumstance is scarcely to be considered in the light of a compliment, for the bell has not the character of exceptional sanctity, and there is a lengthy Pali inscription on the upper part giving further particulars, and commending the pious donors to the safe keeping of the 5000 nats who guard the faith, the tutelary nats of the universe, the nats of the earth, the air, the forest, and the city; but there is nothing whatever in the shape of menaces to such as may have evil designs on the bell. Koo-na-lin-gala, the priest, however, no doubt thought this English addition very necessary and by no means unwarranted; for only two years before, after the conclusion of the second Burmese war, in 1853, the British troops had tried to carry off the sacred Shway Dagohn bell, and had gone the length of getting it on board of a ship. Unfortunately the vessel turned over, and Mahah Ganda, the "great sweet voice," was capsized into the mud at the bottom of the Rangoon river.

The good mendicant, therefore, who superintended the casting of the bell for the Maulmein payah, doubtless thought that none but the utmost terrors would serve to scare off the sacrilegious Briton, and therefore it is with punishment in awidzee, the lowest of the eight chambers of hell, ordinarily reserved for parricides, assaulters of an ascetic, and railers at the Buddha, that all who meditate harm to the Kyaik-than-lan bell are threatened. The fiery monk may rest happy. The bell has hung unmolested from the big crossbar, resting on its two huge teak uprights, and will doubtless long remain safe on the somewhat cramped platform at the end of the Toung Ngyoh range.

The love of bells in Burma is somewhat remarkable. Every large pagoda has some dozens of them, of all sizes, hanging round the skirts of the zaydee, the image-houses, and sacred posts. One or two were put up with the central shrine itself; others have been added at various times by the religious. Most of them have long Pali inscriptions on them recording the praises of the Lord and the aspirations of the giver. Here and there are a few with Burmese dedications, presented by poor, simple jungle people, the monks in whose district did not know Pali, or had the grace to say they were not learned enough to write an original composition in that language. Every Burman has learned a certain number of Pali formulæ to enable him to worship at the pagoda, but few even of the most renowned sadaws have anything like a thorough knowledge of the sacred language. Hence, when there is a modest monk in the kyoung, the simple cultivators have to fall back on their own vernacular, and produce plaintive appeals like the following:—

"This bell was moulded with great care and much expense, and is humbly offered by Moung San Yah, of the hamlet of Nga-pay-oh, in the township of Maoobin, and Mahmah Gyee, his wife, who seek refuge in the boundless mercy of the pitiful Buddha, in the majesty of the eternal Law, and in the example of the venerable Assembly of the Perfect, the three gems. They visit the precious things faithfully on the appointed days. Applaud, ye pious! They humbly strive to gain for themselves merit. May the good nats who guard the forest and the field look smilingly on

them and protect the poor man's crops. May the nats who dwell in the air and the earth defend from evil creatures the two fat bullocks which plough the fields. May the guardian nats of the house and the city keep from harm Chit Oo, their son, and little Mah Mee, their darling daughter. And may the merit of this offering be shared with their children and with all living beings. May the excellent Lord pity them, the good spirits smile on them, the holy assembly receive them. So shall Moung San Yah and Mahmah Gyee gain much merit and rejoice in presenting this bell. Weight, seventy-five viss."

Such dedications are found here and there, but they are not common, for half the honour of presenting the bell is lost if the common crowd can read what is written on it; and doubtless Moung Chit Oo, when he has been to an English school, and has got a place under Government, or in an English merchant's office, will be rather ashamed of the quaint humility of his father's offering.

The bells are not intended to summon worshippers to their devotions. There is no necessity for such a call where there is no formal service. Every man is responsible to himself only for his religious state; no one else has anything directly to do with him, or can give him help. The monks themselves display but little concern in the spiritual state of the laity. If a man is to attain a favourable change in a succeeding existence, it must be by his own exertions. He knows the regular duty-days, and on these and on the special feast-days he goes to gain koothoh for himself and better his chance towards a new transincorporation. If he is a fond man, he parcels out the merit acquired by his devotions among those members of his family or friends who have not been to the pagoda. The use of the bells is to direct attention to the fact of the lauds of the Buddha having been recited. The worshipper, when he has finished, goes to one of the bells and strikes it three times, to bring to the notice of the guardian spirits and the four worlds what he has been doing. There are always a number of deer's antlers and billets of wood lying near the bell for this purpose. None of them have clappers, and metal is not used to strike them. There is no objection whatever to a non-Buddhist striking

the bell; it is indeed rather a kindly action, for the more clangour there is the more likely the nats are to observe the devotions going on. Most of the bells have a fine tone, and a flick with the finger is sufficient to cause a vibration through the whole twenty-five tons of metal in Mahah Ganda. What sound the Mengohn bell, second only in size to that presented by the Empress Catherine to Moscow, is capable of producing, will never, probably, be known, for the supports have given way, and half of the rim rests on the ground. But, as Colonel Yule says, it would have at any time required a battering-ram to bring out its music.

Besides those suspended round the precincts of the payah, the htee, or umbrella, on the top of the edifice, is always hung with a multitude of bells. Those on the more sacred shrines are very often entirely gold or silver. Several on the Shway Dagohn are of gold, studded with precious stones, and are worth many hundred pounds sterling apiece. These, of course, are furnished with tongues, and the slightest breeze causes a constant harmonious tinkling, dear to the worshipper's heart. The object of these bells is identical with that of those below on the platform—to attract the attention of the good spirits in Tawa-dehntha, and other abodes of the nat-dewahs on Mount Myemmoh.

Though the bells are very well moulded, the mode of casting them is of the most primitive possible character. A mould of clay is formed to represent the inside. This is covered with bees'-wax to the proposed thickness of the metal, and over this again is placed a heavy layer of clay, mixed with chopped paddy straw. Through this outer covering there are a number of funnel holes in parallel rings at distances of six or nine inches, and through these the molten metal is poured in, melting and taking the place of the bees'-wax, which flows out at the bottom. Straws inserted through the clay let out the air and steam. Thus the bell is formed in a series of rings one above the other. The copper and tin are melted together in small open-air furnaces round about, and the crucibles are carried in little wicker baskets. Large bells usually are made in a pit dug in the ground. The metal images of the Buddha for the pagodas are cast in a similar way. When the mass has cooled, the

outside is polished, and any flaws there may be are patched up. Then the inscription is chiselled on, and the bell is solemnly dedicated.

The casting is made quite as much a ceremony as it used to be in the Middle Ages in Europe. The whole district gathers to see the operation. Songs are sung, and bands clash and play while the actual casting is going on, and sometimes the vast multitude is wrought up to such a state of enthusiasm that women and children throw in their necklaces, and gold and silver rings and bangles. Traces of these are to be seen in the inside of many bells, in the shape of whitish or yellowish streaks. The workmen sometimes, in the case of large bells, try to strengthen them by twisting iron chains round the inner mould in the midst of the bees'-wax. Such a chain cable is distinctly to be seen in the great ninety-ton Mengohn bell. Since the "Great Monarch" of Moscow became a chapel, this is actually the biggest bell in the world.

The shape of Burmese bells is not handsome. They come straight down to the mouth like a barrel—not expanding at the rim, like those of European make, but their tone is very sweet. In Burma bells are entirely reserved for pagodas. A Burman never has a bell in his house; and it would, in fact, be no use to him there if he had it. Englishmen do not use them either, so that throughout the whole country the bell is only used for sacred purposes.

The following is a translation of the inscription on the bell numbered 15219 in the Indian section of the South Kensington Museum:—

"The Victor, the All-gracious" [referring to Gautama, the Lord Buddha].

"The gist of the discourse on worship, as it appears in the beginning of the Dhamma-set, is as follows:—One must give goods in alms; one must preach the Law: these two things are good deeds both for this world and for the next; they lead into the four meggas and the four palin-sahs, the paths by which a man may pass to neh'ban. Without charity you cannot attain to neh'ban; so it is written in the Pali, in the texts, the Tagatah and the Teegah, and the commentaries on these sacred books.

"A seemly place is this, a goodly and far-famed place [the shrine where the bell was set up], renowned throughout the four systems of ten thousand worlds, among the Nat-dewahs, the Athooras, the Byammahs, the Thagyahs, the Nagahs, the Gohnba Yekkhas [the guardians of the Thagyah realms], and all such beings to whom reverence may be paid.

"The Pagahn Min [who was deposed during the second Burmese war in 1852, and died of smallpox in 1880], who has received the divine authority, the king of this country, gave to me, as to one of his pages to whom he gives commands, the title of Mahah Min-goung Kyaw Din, because I was an old and true servant of his, listening reverently to all his commands; this title he gave me with power over three districts, with mercy abundant, like the earth and all the precious things.

"I, the giver of the bell, the famous man, the Yaywoon Min, was staying in the sweet-smelling town of Ma-oo, of which I collect the revenue for the king, and with me was my wife, my life's breath, Meh Shway Gohn, like to the pollen of a lily, from whom I will not be separated in all the existences to come, out of which we hope soon to escape, and therefore we give praises now in order to advance in the Meggas and the Poh [the four great attainments]; we adore before the Lord Buddha that we may embark on the golden raft of the noble path which will conduct us to the final plunge into neh'ban; we two, brother and sister [commonly used for husband and wife], have given this bell as an offering to the seven precious things.

"The exact weight of the bell in current reckoning is 2500 kyats weight. In this attempt to merit neh'ban our method was as follows:—We took our own weight in gold and in silver and bought copper and other metal [lawhah, the Pali word used, implies *five* metals—gold, silver, copper, iron, and lead], and mixed them well together.

"In the year 1209 [1847 A.D.], in the hot season, at a fortunate hour, I had it moulded, setting my heart on giving it in alms. As I wrote this inscription I offered up abundant prayer that no enemies or troubles might come nigh me, and that I might obtain neh'ban. Then I dedicated it.

"Now will I record all the alms which I gave and erected within the sacred enclosure of the pagoda, round the slender spire. I gave a tagohn-deing, the price of which, with all incidental expenses in putting up and everything, was five hundred rupees; that was the alms exactly. At the foot of the tagohn-deing I built four small pagodas, making bold to offer them in alms. In addition to these I built, outside the pagoda enclosure, a monastery and a rest-house. I, the Yaywoon Min, wished earnestly to give the greatest alms of any in fragrant Ma-oo-myo, of which I collected the taxes. I, the Yaywoon Min, and my wife, my sons and my daughters, the four chief parties, together with my servants and slaves [presented these things]. I persuaded them all to give alms that they might attain to neh'ban, the deliverance; that they might prepare for themselves the way, difficult and full of swirling eddies. Let the four congregations — let men, nat-dewahs, and all creatures, unite in praise.

"Such are all my offerings; these alms dedicated all together, in order to gain merit, to rise and progress to neh'ban—to the world just before it [the last of corporeal lives]. May I be freed from the four states of punishment; the three great kaps [fighting, famine, and plague]; the eight evil places, from which a man is born blind, dumb, and otherwise crippled; from the five enemies; from unfortunate times and seasons; from bad-intentioned people; may I escape all these when I die. When new glories wake up, I will give praise; in the king's palace, the golden dwelling where the king lives; I will ponder well and chant aloud the praise of faith. Very high, even to the skies, rises the pagoda given in alms by the Ma-oo revenue collector, the Yaywoon Min payah, the pious founder. All men and nat-dewahs, when they behold it, will cry out eagerly in praise, they will shout thah-doo [well done, thou good and faithful servant], with united, limitless clamour.

"The good that I have done in this world; all the alms that I have given [may they be for the benefit of] my parents, teachers, cousins, and all my relations; all who in Zampoo-deepa are kings of the earth, all queens, their sons and daughters; nobles and all men of rank, officers, and all

people of the earth in the thirty-one seats of the world. All the merits I have gained, may they be shared with these. I give them and share them freely. The alms are manifest. I have given them. This good work, when I forget it [*i.e.* in my next life], may it be counted to me in the time of the Buddha Areemadehya, when he is revealed. The friendly witnessing nats will bear testimony, as they wring the water from their streaming hair."

The allusion to the witnessing spirits refers to the Mathohndayay nats who testified that Shin Gautama was the true Buddha. Mahn Nat, the spirit of evil, came and claimed the throne under the Bawdee-bin as his, and appealed to all his countless retinue as witnesses that he was the true Buddha, and the rightful possessor of the throne. They replied with a great shout. The Lord Budda had no one to call in evidence but the earth, and to it he addressed himself. The earth replied with a violent quaking and a roar that scared away all Mahn Nat's noisy host. The Mathohndayay nats stand as representatives of the earth, and it is to gain their testimony that a cup of water is always poured out whenever an offering is made. Hence their wet hair. At the Shway Zee-Gohn pagoda between Nyoung-oo and Pagahn, the Mathohndayay nats are represented under umbrellas and with books. Their images almost always display them wringing the water out of their long tresses.

The small bell in the South Kensington Museum, in the case close by the larger one, bears the following inscription :— "In the month of Tabohdwè [February], on the fifth of the waning moon, in the year 1204 [1842 A.D.], on a Sunday at about four in the afternoon, this bell was cast and moulded of pure copper. Its weight is 594,049 kyats [this is an absurd misstatement, or a gross piece of flattery to the king]. There are four lions on the hanging apparatus. Its height is nine fingers' breadths ; the diameter five inches ; the circumference fifteen ; the thickness twenty-four (lines?). It is called the Mahahtee Thadda Ganda (the great, sweet sound). The man who had this royal bell moulded was the Burman king Tharrawaddy, Kohn-Boung Min."

## CHAPTER XIX

### A PAGODA FEAST

A PAGODA feast in Burma is one of the most frequent, as well as one of the most picturesque sights in the country. Each shrine has its own special sacred day; and the annual celebration of it is made the occasion of a general picnic, the congregation of people, from all parts of the surrounding districts, being bent no less on pleasure than on pious observances. Reverence for the shrines of various saints in different parts of Europe gave rise to the great fairs which were general until the end of last century, and survive even now in out-of-the-way places. Doubtless, if the Burmese were a commercial people, and cared for the putting together of pieces of silver, these gatherings might degenerate into occasions of barter and bickerings of trade—just as, if they were a practical people, their zaht-pwè might blossom into something of a more real character, as the old mystery and morality plays gave birth to the modern drama of Europe. But the Burmese do not care for any of these things; and the pagoda festivals retain therefore the character they have always had, of ostensible religious assemblies. Still their most obvious characteristic to the ordinary public mind is very different. Youths and girls look forward to them as seasons of mirth and flirtation: long nights at the open-air theatre, feastings and perpetual amusements, the pleasanter because lasting no more than a couple of days. Elderly people have no less liking for them. They meet their old friends, and receive and recount the gossip of half a dozen districts; and there is always a succession of new acquaintances. It is a joyous holiday; and it is sanctified by the

thought that the few hours spent at the payah gather up stores of koothoh, not less certainly profitable than the social delights of the "duty day" are pleasurable.

The greatest of all the pagoda feasts is, of course, that of the Shway Dagohn in Rangoon, with its pilgrims, not only from the farthest parts of Burma and far-away Shan hills, but also from over the seas, from Siam and Cambodia and the Corea. But the vastness of the gathering and the proximity of the great town spoil the national character of the festival, and introduce too many elements of nineteenth-century civilisation in the shape of merry-go-rounds and hack carriages. A "jungle" feast is not only more characteristic, but more appreciated in its way by both town and country folk.

There are three old Talaing pagodas near Rangoon, Kyaik-ka-san, Kyaik-ka-lo, and Kyaik-weing, whose annual duty days are looked forward to with pleasure by all the people round about. The feasts all occur in the month of Ta-bo-dwè, corresponding to our February or March. I have a suspicion that, were the proper date adhered to, all three would have the same ooboh-nay; but such a lavish squandering of the good a popular religion provides for us would hardly meet with lay approval, even if advocated by the most holy of hermits. Accordingly the three pagoda days occur at intervals of a week, without reference to the crescent or waning moon; and latterly, with singular convenience for Burmans occupied in business in Rangoon, have usually been fixed for Sunday; so that English merchants are not troubled with the sudden ailments of their clerks at this season so much as used formerly to be the case. The Kyaik-ka-san is probably the most sacred of the three; containing as it does a tooth and bone of the forehead of Shin Gautama, brought to Rangoon by a yahanda, a blameless mendicant, over whose remains in Rangoon a huge thehn-gyee, or ceremonial building, has been erected. Kyaik-ka-lo is, however, seemingly the more popular. It stands on the summit of a little hill about fourteen miles north of Rangoon, and is built of laterite blocks, now faced with bricks covered with plaster. The shrine was built in the second century before Christ, and, ninety feet high itself, is surrounded by twenty-four smaller zaydee-yan of a much later date.

Great crowds of people go out every year from Rangoon, starting early in the morning, so as to avoid the heat, though in February the bracing winds of the cold weather have not altogether gone. Most of the travelling is done in bullock-carts. These conveyances are not nearly so fine as the Mandalay vehicles, but they are neat enough; the pole is elaborately carved at the end, and above all they are roomy, and allow "Jack Burma" and his family to loll about as they please. Bamboos are bent over to form a hood, and over this is thrown a kullagah, a piece of tapestry-work formed of pieces of many-coloured cloth sewn on to a red blanket so as to represent figures; the scenes being usually taken from some well-known play or from the court. They are eight or ten feet long, and four or five broad, affording a capital shelter from the sun, and combining the advantage of being easily moved when there is a breeze, with the still greater merit of looking very gay and bright. The party starts off before daylight, young master Loo-galay being left behind to guard the house till the rest come back, and testifying his disapproval of the responsibility of this duty by strenuous howls. The Madrasi sepoy lines are soon passed, and we get out into the undulating country beyond, and pass through the gardens and orchards which abound along the Prome road. The ground here is not suited for rice, and there are large areas covered with mango, jack, ma-yan, a kind of acid plum (which the perverse Englishman persists in calling Mary-Anne), and other fruit-trees, with pine-apples in long rows beneath their shade. The Chinese have great market-gardens here, miracles of neatness, but far from savoury in their odours. They never miss a chance of making money, and accordingly this morning turn over a few pice by selling sugar-cane to the girls, and bamboo pipes of palm-toddy to the men. The Shans, also born gardeners, to whom the fruit-trees mostly belong, are very pious, and join in the pilgrimage with their quaint offering-flags made of slim frameworks of bamboo, woven across in diverse patterns with vari-coloured cotton threads. A little farther on we get beyond the region of the toung-ya gardens, and pass between monotonous stretches of secondary jungle with no houses to be seen, though behind the strip of tangled

bush there are wide expanses of rice-land with little bamboo huts dotted here and there in clusters. But the sun is getting high, and about half-way on the journey, old Moung Gyee declares he is hungry, and draws up the cart under a bank in a shady hollow. The bullocks are turned loose, and preparations made for breakfast. The entire house service has been brought with us. It is not very extensive, certainly. A couple of earthen pots with covers, and a flat wooden spoon to stir up the rice or curry; a ladle made of half a cocoa-nut, with a handle in it; a big round flat dish of plain lacquered wood to place the entire feast on when it is ready; and a few bamboo, lacquered cups, without handles, with perhaps a plate or two, complete the list. The provender is equally simple. A heap of plain boiled rice, dried fish, chillies, onions, nga-pee, some salt and oil—that is the sum total. But it is eaten with zest and good appetite, and the little stream furnishes wherewith to wash it down. Then the ladies produce cheroots for the party from the recesses of their bamboo plaited pahs, and light up for everybody if they are good-natured.

Numbers of other carts have come up and stopped or passed on in the meantime, and, hilarious with his breakfast, Moung Gyee challenges neighbour Oo Hpay to a race; and forthwith the bullocks are brought into a shambling trot, and amidst much prodding with sticks and cries of "Hé noa" and "Tun-n-ng," and other sounds understanded of cattle, a fairly level race is kept up for half a mile or so. Then the carts are pulled up, and their inmates burst into loud talk, having been hitherto precluded from expressing their triumph or chagrin from a fear of biting their tongues off in the jolting, or of being choked with the dust. Notes are compared as to who is coming and who has stayed away, and then fresh acquaintances are sighted in the passing throng; and so with much good humour and pleasant meetings the fourteen-mile journey is safely got over. Arrived at the zayat, the rest-house, which marks the point whence the path to the shrine strikes off from the highway, the cart is turned aside among the low bushes; the oxen are cast off and tethered up, and mats and bedding spread out below the cart in readiness against bed-time. Then our

party breaks up to seek friends in the crowd; the girls taking off their travelling-dress and putting on their finest tamehns, an operation which it would puzzle English women to do in public with equally scanty raiment and equal modesty. But they do it deftly; and, after touching up their complexion with a little fragrant thana'kha, are off, followed shortly by their brothers, who, in the absence of a looking-glass, have some difficulty in winding on their turbans to their liking. However, that is eventually done, and the remaining hours of daylight are spent in pleasant talk with friends, and wanderings through the shrub-growth and tall grass which cover the spur, at the end of which is the pagoda. The little tank, a brick-built pond, which lies at the foot of the hollow, falling away from the monastery, is a great rendezvous, and many of the older people climb the slope to have some talk with the abbot.

At nightfall there is a general gathering in the cleared space where the stage for the puppet-play is erected. The monks of the kyoung are not Soola-gandees, and do not prohibit the acting of a play so near to the sacred precincts. Besides, it is the Waythandaya Woottoo, one of the ten greatest birth-stories; and there is a troupe of famous manipulators from Rangoon. The marionette play is more esteemed by the people than the legitimate drama, and it is more suited to the neighbourhood of the relic-shrine. Nevertheless, a zaht-pwè, got up by the amateur actors and actresses of the village of San-gyee-wah, a mile back on the road, is also well patronised, so that all tastes are consulted.

The people sit round about in a dense crowd, smoking and chewing betel, many of the young men strolling about and flirting in the impromptu bazaar which some business-like girls have started. This goes on till daylight, the audience alternately sleeping and looking on and applauding. At early dawn, the offerings are made to the yahans, and all crowd to the shrine to recite their sentences in praise of the Lord Buddha. After breakfast there is more gossip and conversation with friends. A few of the old people listen to the reading and expounding of the Law by the superior of the monastery, but the young continue the amusements of the day before. The cool of the evening, or the following

morning at latest, sees all on their way home again, the fun being kept up with, if anything, increased zest. Every one is in high spirits. There has been much merit gained by the pilgrimage, and the personal enjoyment of the trip has been no less satisfactory. Gay turbans are hung up as flags from the carts, and songs and choruses are frequent and jovial. Many a marriage is settled at these pious picnics. There is such abundant opportunity for love-making at the open-air encampment, where the old people are so engaged in talking with relations and friends whom they have not seen for the last twelve months, that they forget how craftily they utilised similar opportunities when they were young themselves. Besides, at the end of February, Lent is beginning to loom up, and in Lent nobody can be married, and those girls who do not care for the watery courtship of the New Year's Feast in April are often induced to be complaisant at the country pagoda feasts. Many a young couple have special cause to remember the happy ride back. The Buddhist faith may be as dreary, without hope, without belief in the world, as many say it is, but no one would imagine it so who looks on the gaily-dressed laughing crowd of men and maidens who throng to the country pagoda feasts.

## CHAPTER XX

### DUTY DAYS

THERE are four ooboh-nay, or duty days, in every lunar month, on which all good Burmans are expected to go and worship at the pagodas. These are the eighth of the crescent, the full moon, the eighth of the waning, and the change, of which the second and the fourth are the more sacred. As the monks have nothing to do with looking after the spiritual state of the people, it is entirely a matter to be settled by one's self whether any particular worship day is to be observed or not. If you conclude that strict religious observances are only necessary for your spiritual well-being on the day of the full moon, or at any rate that you may leave out the eighth of the crescent and waning moon, then the ooboh-nay does not concern you at all, and you may proceed about your ordinary business without being considered a reprobate. The very devout may go to the pagoda on all the four sacred days of the month; but if you choose to omit one or several, or substitute an ordinary day for that provided by religious custom, there is no one to take you to task for it. Were a Burman never to go to the pagoda at all, or fail to do so for any considerable time, he would indeed soon get a very bad character among his neighbours, and might even be formally excommunicated by the yahans: there is however practically no constraint save the force of public opinion. But the duties of worship are so light, and so dependent in their details upon yourself, and there is so much amusement to be got out of a visit to the pagoda on an ooboh-nay, that few, even of the most worldly-minded,

miss any great number of the appointed days, and a special festival is always carefully observed.

With the really devout, a worship day always commences on the previous evening, that of the a-peht-nay, or day of preparation. In most country villages, and occasionally even in the large English towns of Lower Burma, a few old men, as a voluntary work of merit, go round about the place beating the kyee-zee, the triangular gong, used only for this and similar religious purposes. The instrument is suspended by a string to a stick carried over the shoulder, and as the sounds vibrate, rise and fall, quicken and die away with the winding and unwinding of the cord, those who intend to keep the duty day well make ready for a start to the pagoda. Mats, sleeping-rugs, blankets, and eatables are gathered together; and the whole family, with the exception of a couple of the children perhaps, left behind to look after the house, set off in a body, preceded in most cases by a kyee-zee of their own, struck at intervals by the head of the family, who slings it on a bamboo, to the other end of which, as a kind of equipoise, is fastened a lamp. The purpose of this ceremony of striking the gong is to announce to the four worlds the good work on which the party is engaged. They make their way to one of the numerous zayats, erected round the pagoda for the accommodation of pious people. If the family be a wealthy one they have probably such an open-sided, floored shed of their own, erected for the general use, but virtually reserved for themselves when required. If they have not, or if the shrine is small and the rest-houses few, they put up in one of the general zayats, where they can always find a quiet corner to settle in. There they sleep, or, what is better, tell their beads and meditate.

Some time before daylight the food intended for the yahans is cooked, and when the sun rises a message is sent to the monastery that everything is ready. The alms have been put together in a heap in the middle of the zayat, in front of the permanent platform on which the mendicants take their station after they have arrived in a long procession of Indian file. In the meantime numbers of other more comfort-seeking laymen, who have slept at home, come

trooping in from the town, also bringing offerings for the pagoda, and food for themselves and the pyin-sin. When a congregation has been made up, or when the family party is complete, the senior monk recites the Ten Precepts incumbent on all oopathaka on duty days, and adds some portion of the sermons of Shin Gautama, the other pyin-sin, sitting behind their big fans to hide the women from their sight, occasionally making the responses. Finally the Payeht-gyee, or some similar litany of praise, is intoned; all the congregation joining in the chant, with upraised hands clasping a flower or some other symbol of offering. With this the service ends. . The yahans rise from behind their fans and file back to the monastery again, the food being carried after them by the pupils or the donors. When this is done the worshippers set about preparing their own breakfast—unless, indeed, as is probable, it was cooked at the same time as the food for the yahans. Each family eats separately, arranged in a circle round the great byat, or platter of rice. If, however, any one has some particular delicacy — the celebrated nga-pee goung fish paste from Payah Gyee, in the An-gyee township, iguana's eggs from Shway Gyeen side, or pickled tea fresh from the Shan hills —he gives of his abundance to those round about; and any solitary stranger from a distance is always sure of an invitation to join some breakfast party. When all have finished eating, the fragments that remain are thrown out for the pariah dogs and the crows. Additional merit is of course gained by this act of charity. For the rest of the day, with the exception of the time that may be spent in repeating doxologies before the image of the Buddha at the pagoda, nothing is done. Every one is dressed in his best and goes about meeting his friends, or lolling comfortably with a cheroot in the zayat waiting for them to come to him. Vast quantities of betel-nut and pickled tea and local gossip are discussed. The racing-boat the Bassein men are getting ready to send for the October contests in Mandalay; the brass image Moung Waik, the extra assistant commissioner, is going to dedicate next month; the old witch down at Yuah Thit Gyee, who has caused the murrain among the Thoo-gyee's buffaloes, and the nuisance it is that the English

A-yaybaing will not allow her to be tied to a bamboo and pitched into the river in the good old fashion, to prove that she really does trade in the black art; the new style in Manchester-flowered turbans that Ah Loke, the Chinese pedlar, has brought in his boat from Rangoon—all these, and a great variety of kindred topics, are considered under all their aspects.

It must not, however, be supposed that all the people take this easy-going and frivolous view of duty days. Diligent seekers after koothoh behave very differently. They do not merely limit themselves to the customary forms of worship and offerings. They sleep little, or not at all, the night before; telling their beads instead, and reading good books, some of the discourses of the Buddha, or portions of the greater zahts. All necessary business is transacted the day previous to the ooboh-nay, and neighbours are exhorted to observe the festival properly. After one simple dish in the morning, they eat nothing for the rest of the day; or perhaps on certain occasions do not break their fast till after mid-day, a custom very general on the first day of Lent. Instead of staying in the noisy zayat, where the assembled people are talking of light matters, laughing, and diverting themselves, they retire to a tazoung on the pagoda platform, or to some place shaded by trees, where they finger the hundred and eight beads of their rosary, muttering, "All is transient, sorrowful, and vain; the Lord, the Law, the Assembly; the three precious things;" and meditate on the example of the Lord Buddha and the excellence of his Law. To vary the monotony of this performance, they go for an hour or two to one of the monasteries to talk with the prior or some learned brother, or perhaps to hear him read and expound one of the jatakas, or birth-stories.

So the duty day passes. By sunset most of the worshippers are making their way back to their homes; but a few zealous spirits remain all night in the zayat, and only return with daylight on the following morning. This simple round of celebration is repeated four times in every lunar month, with here and there a feast-day of some particular shrine thrown in, when the only difference is that there is greater ceremony and a more or less large influx of strangers, according to the sanctity of the pagoda.

The sole distinction between Lent—lasting from the day after the full moon of July to the full moon of October—and the rest of the year, is that all laymen are expected to be much more regular in their observance of the weekly religious days. It is not a season of fasting, but simply of stricter execution of religious duties. No marriages, feasts, or public amusements are held, or only by the graceless; and some of the yahans retire into the depths of the jungle, where they can devote themselves to meditation with greater security from interruption. The custom of regarding these three months as peculiarly sacred undoubtedly rose from the habit of the monks, in the first days after the Buddha's teaching, remaining steadfastly in their monasteries in Magadha during the period of the annual rains, devoting all their time to pondering over the Sacred Law, and expounding it to any laymen dahyakhas, or oopathakas, inquirers, or believers and searchers after the truth, who came to consult with them in their dwellings; seeking to enter the current of perfection, and, attaining the state of arahan, to float into Neh'ban, the state of joyless, painless calm. Nowadays all are expected to study the Law for themselves; but in order to prepare themselves worthily for the Wah, the wealthier people often call in the more learned yahans to deliver exhortations in their houses. Numbers of relations and friends are invited, who bring presents for the holy man, in the hope of sharing the merit of the transaction. Portions of the holy books usually are read on these occasions, especially the much-admired Waythandaya Woottoo. The doctrine inculcated by this zaht is charity; and malicious people do not hesitate to say that the giving of alms is the invariable theme of the pyin-sin. But I have at least as often heard the praises of wisdom from the Lawkaneedee recited at such Lenten lectures, and a portion may be quoted here: "The ignorant bow down before the wise man. The riches of the wise man are like a bubbling spring, a fountain that never runs dry, and that, however constantly you may draw from it, is ever filled anew. The beauty of women and the sweetness of the sugar-cane bring satiety, but the words of wisdom never pall. The lazy man will never get learning. Any man may be endowed with riches, beauty, rank, youth; but without know-

ledge he is but as a beautiful flower that hath no perfume. The fragrance of flowers is refreshing ; more so is the light of the cool moon's rays ; but the greatest delight comes from the words of wisdom. The sun may rise in the west ; the summit of Mount Meru may be bent like a bow ; the fires of hell may languish and die out ; the lotus may spring on the tops of the mountains ; but the words of truth and wisdom are always the same."

Similarly the riches of man are said to consist in his learning, his family, and his good name ; of a woman in her beauty ; of a great man in his rank, influence, position, and the number of his slaves ; of a monk in his austerity ; of a serpent in its poison ; and of a pohnna in his oaths and his prophecies.

Thirteen kinds of pride are enumerated. To lie in the cool shade, with the power of the heavens at his command, and to be victorious over his enemies, is the pride of the thagyah king. The galohn delights in flying throughout the skies above or below. The nagah prides himself in his wondrous works, bright and glorious. The lion's pride is to overcome his enemies and destroy all opposition. The merchant's pride is to have obedient slaves and abundance of gold and silver. The soldier's to enter a town with the clash of the cymbal and the pomp of military music. The peasant's to finish his toil honestly and well. The yahanda finds his pride in the power of wisdom and in books. The prince in triumphing over routed enemies and enriching himself with their spoil. A woman's pride is to talk in a pleasant and amusing way. A man's to be celebrated and feared for his strength of mind and body. A doctor's to effect successful cures with his own medicines, and a pohnna's pride is in his wisdom and knowledge of the Baydin.

The significance of all this and a deal more similar useless information, is that during the Wah the sacred books should be studied, while all youths should receive their Buddhist baptism by putting on the wah, the yellow robe of the cloister—a Burmese play upon words which has a further significance to the young neophytes, in the reflection that "wah" also means a bamboo, which yahans do not spare, Lent or no Lent.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE END OF LENT

THE end of the Wah, or the full moon of Thadin-gyoot, is always the occasion of a regular carnival of enjoyment, which in Rangoon has latterly shown a tendency to degenerate into uproarious saturnalia. The dismal season of the rains and of Lent, when there were no pwès anywhere, no feasts, no courting to be done wherever the parents were at all strict, no amusement of any kind to be had, except the somewhat tame diversion of a gossip with kindred spirits at the pagoda on the duty days—all this has passed away. Plays, a-hloo pwè and kyee-gyin pwè, are to be seen in every quarter; young brothers who have just finished their three months as novitiants in the monastery and have come out into the world again are wild with excitement at their regained freedom, and infect their sisters with enthusiasm for gaiety of all sorts; the town is illuminated, feasting goes on everywhere, and the street plays are so crowded that you cannot secure a decent place unless you come down early in the afternoon, or at any rate before nightfall.

But all public festivals in Burma are religious in their character, and the rejoicings at wah-gyoot are not less so than those at wah-win, when every one was preparing for the austerities of Lent, instead of the relaxations of the coming cold months. Accordingly the merry season is ushered in with a great feasting of the monks. This sohn-daw-gyee pwè is not so extensive, properly speaking, as the legitimate festival of that name a month later at the time of the Tawadehntha feast, and as a matter of fact is much more modest in its character in the small towns and

villages. But in Rangoon it has assumed in recent years a form which gives a great deal of offence to all the more serious people, and is especially condemned by the austere Soola-gandees. Instead of having the offerings displayed in their houses and giving them to the yahans when they come round in the gray of the morning, the new fashion with the inhabitants of Rangoon is to carry all the alms to the monastery overnight, set them up in goodly array, there and then hold receptions, sing songs, dance, play musical instruments, and generally turn the quiet monastery into the semblance of an uproarious "penny gaff." This objectionable innovation has gradually arisen out of the practice of a few of the more pious old people who at the end of Lent used to go in the evenings with a-hloo for the pyin-sin, listen to some pious discourses, or the recitation of some sacred zaht, and then return betimes to bed. But now the frivolous find monks not less carnal-minded than themselves. Subscriptions are raised for weeks beforehand to make a grand display; one of the yahans is asked to grant the zayat near his house for the occasion. Some of the monks of the Thayet-daw kyoung in Godwin's Road, which is the chief sinner in this respect, are even so shameless as actually to go touting about for people to take their zayats, or at times their very houses.

Then at nightfall, on the full moon, the people begin to troop in. Those who have taken the management of the almsgiving are there before. We enter by one of the little wooden bridges, and come across a pya-that immediately, glittering bright with the moonlight and the glaring torches which are gathered thick farther on among the pohn-gyees' houses and the mango-trees from which the monastery takes its name. The spire has just been deposited, and the band has barely stopped the music which sounds so strange within the sacred parawoon. But there is more coming that will be a far greater shock to up-country notions of religious propriety. The first house we come to is a zayat, and Moung Moung, the dispenser of hospitality, recognises us and calls us up. All his female friends are arranged in a row at the back, dressed in their finest, and before them, just as at the Ta'soung mohn alms-feast, are heaped up piles of fruits,

savoury curries, cakes, biscuits, and sweetmeats of all kinds, intended for the monks; while scattered about are great *repoussé* silver bowls full of sherbet, gold and silver cups, lamps, mirrors, and all the familiar adornments fit enough for a private house, but singularly out of place where a gay piece of tapestry hung up barely conceals the image at the eastern side of the rest-house. Moung Moung offers us some lemonade, and we light cheroots, exchange a few compliments with the ladies, and pass on, just as a noisy half dozen of young Englishmen from one of the mercantile houses come scrambling up the ladder-like steps. It would be well if these gentlemen would remember that each of the houses is to all intents and purposes a private assembly for the night, and that, though the host always welcomes them, he understands English, and does not by any means relish the mocking comments which are lavished on everything, and still less is inclined to approve of the criticisms on the ladies. But then there are so few Englishmen in Burma who understand the very shortest sentence in the language that they may be pardoned if they mistake for a promiscuous saturnalia what is nominally a religious ceremony. We leave them joking with Moung Moung and the hostess, as she offers them some beer—beer in a monastery! But then it is known that Englishmen will be there, and the Burman's notion is that an Englishman only leaves off drinking beer when he drinks brandy, so this last indignity is not objected to by the yahans.

Farther on we come to the place we are specially in search of. The master of ceremonies here is our friend Moung Poh See, a Patama Byan, a certificated theologian and long resident in Mandalay, qualified, therefore, to be a yahan himself, and from his previous experiences, one would think, not at all likely to countenance such open contempt of the provisions of the Weenee, which treatise his success in the above-mentioned "theological tripos" implies that he knows by heart. But "Mr. Grandfather Oil" is very emphatically in the world of kahma; he is far from having beaten down the passions, and his place is the most startlingly secular of them all. He has got the house of a myizzee matee, a pohn-gyee who has been ten Lents in the Order, and

ought therefore to scorn such desecration for any purpose whatever, and certainly should not be tempted by the offer of a feast for his palate. But the fact remains that not only has he given up the front part of his kyoung, all but the elevated dais on the eastern side, where the images stand and visitors are received, but there is actually a play going on, trumpets braying, drums beating, and the bamboo clappers sounding high over all. It is a zaht, a birth-story certainly, but that does not make it any less a sin for the pohn-gyee to be so near, and with all those thirty pretty girls looking on too. The monk is behind the curtain which shuts off the undesecrated part of the building, it is true, but he can hardly be asleep with all that music, surely, and it is a crime for a member of the Order to listen to music. Yet who is to condemn him to penance when the prior's house is very little better? In some of the kyoungs, indeed, the younger yahans take very little trouble to conceal the fact that they are looking through the chinks of the slight hangings which cut off their sleeping-places from the noisy throng on the other side. The Englishmen, when they come round, push aside the kullagahs to see what is behind, stumble over the peeping postulants, and scare the conscience-stricken "ascetics" almost out of their senses, under the impression that it is a beeloo who has been enabled to gain access, and is going to devour them incontinently. Nevertheless there is no check in the revelry. It goes on until far into the night, and increases in noise the later it gets. The liquor which has been brought for expected visiting foreigners cannot be left behind in the kyoungs; they are not low enough for that yet. Consequently, the laymen must drink it. The result is that as time goes on there are quarrels and fights; and in this very Thayet-daw kyoung in the Thadin-gyoot of 1879 a man was stabbed and died within the limits of the parawoon. Little wonder that the strict Soola-gandees are gaining over many of the more respectable inhabitants of Rangoon, for even this horror has not diminished the popularity of the wah-gyoot alms-feast.

The noise and hubbub go on till far into the morning, and when at last the people go, the monks may be supposed to have a little rest, for they can hardly have slept much

before, however steadily they lay on their mats. The offerings are eaten next morning, and it is greatly to be feared that there are many abstentions from the morning's round of alms-begging. Such dissipation must scatter to the winds any merit acquired by diligent piety and meditation in the long weeks of Lent.

In country towns, revels of this kind are never seen, and even in Mandalay, though there are festivities in abundance, the monasteries are never invaded in this scandalous way. A more harmless and decidedly prettier custom is the illumination, called toung-pyee pwè, of the pagodas and the town. In Rangoon a very fine effect is produced by hanging the Soolay Pagoda, in Fytche Square, all round with Chinese lanterns, from the base up to the top of the thabeht-hmouk, where the body of the shrine begins to narrow into the spire. The rings of coloured light narrowing upwards in a veritable pyramid of fire, produce one of the finest sights of the kind to be seen in the country. The street lamps, however, somewhat handicap the simple means of illumination open to the inhabitants, and to see the illumination of a town at its best one must go to Mandalay at wah-gyoot time. There for three nights the whole city is a blaze of light, contrasting very emphatically with its usual gloomy appearance. Candles are placed on posts at intervals of ten paces in every street, and the tsè-ehng goungs have very plain-worded instructions as to what will happen to them if any of the lights in front of the ten houses of which they have charge go out. Mandalay Hill is a fine sight. The two covered ways which lead up the steep uneven sides to the pagoda and the richly gilt Gautama on the top, look like streams of flame, or fiery serpents from the haunted nat-toung, under the shade of the Shan hills. But the monasteries which cluster close in to the foot of the sacred hill are all as dark and still as on any night in the middle of the Wah. No unseemly orgies are permitted there. In the town, on the other hand, all is noise and merriment. Bands of music and dances figure at the corners of all the chief streets, and the king himself, or the ministers at his request, gives plays at each of the four gates of the palace stockade. The capital is crowded with umbrella-bearing chiefs and officials, Shan tsawbwas, and

chieftains of the mountain tribes all come down with their bands of wild followers to do homage to the Lord of the Rising Sun, for the greatest of the kadaw-nay, the beg-pardon days, is always immediately after Lent. Having brought their minds into a sedate and tranquil state by the observances of the Wah, it is fitting that men should come and make submission and do obeisance at the golden feet.

At the same season there is an illumination on the river. As soon as it is dark the villagers row out into the middle of the stream and set adrift a multitude of little oil-lamps, each fastened to a little float of bamboo or plantain stems. The lamps are simply little earthenware cups filled with oil, and each supplied with a small piece of cotton for a wick. Thousands of them are sent out by a single village, and the sight from a steamer suddenly rounding a bend and coming upon a bank of these little stars of light afloat on the river is very singular. In the distance it looks like a regular sea of flame, and as there is plenty of oil, on the night of the full moon there is a constant succession of these shoals of twinkling lights floating down the whole length of the Irrawaddy from above Bhamaw to China Buckeer, every village sending its contingent.

This ceremony, called yay-hpoung hmyaw thee, or mee-hpoung hmyaw thee, launching water or fire rafts, is in remembrance of a universally honoured payah-ngè, a lesser divinity called Shin Oopagoh, who lives down at the bottom of the river in a kyee-pya-that, a brazen spire, where he zealously keeps the sacred days. In a former existence he carried off the clothes of a bather, and for this mischievous pleasantry is condemned to remain in his present quarters till Areemadehya, the next Buddha, shall come. Then he will be set free, and entering the thenga will become a yahanda, and attain Neh'ban. He is a favourite subject for pictures, which represent him sitting under his brazen roof, or on the stump of a tree, eating out of an alms-bowl, which he carries in his arms. Sometimes he is depicted gazing sideways up to the skies, where he seeks a place that is not polluted by corpses. Such a spot is not to be found on earth, where every stock and stone is but the receptacle of a departed spirit. The notion is like that of the Tibetan

monks, who look upon the earth as simply a vast graveyard. They carry human finger-joints strung together for a rosary, eat their food out of a human skull, and instead of horns for trumpets use the bones of a man's forearm. "We are dead," they say, "and dead men have nothing to do with the things of the living."

Of a similar character to this illuminating of the pagodas, the town, and the river, is the letting loose of fire-balloons, from the end of Lent to the Tawadehntha festival in Ta'soungmohn. The balloons are sometimes very big, but they are simple enough structures. A bamboo framework is covered over with the thick, coarse, home-made paper manufactured from the bark of the ma-hlaing-bin (*Broussonetia papyrifera*), which also supplies the material for the black parabeik note-books. At the bottom, across the open mouth of the balloon, is a little platform, on which pitch is heaped, and with torches attached to it. The balloon is then tethered to the ground. The torches and resinous matter are lighted, and when the strain on the stays is considered sufficient, they are cut, and the balloon goes off. They are dangerous in large towns, and are forbidden there, but the Burman considers that the law applies only to the ground round the town, and dozens are let off every year from spots only a hundred yards or so outside of municipal limits. Not unseldom dohn, rockets, and other kinds of fire-works are attached to them, not by any means tending to make them safer for the houses below. This mee-ehng byan, as it is called, is in honour of the Soola-manee payah, a pagoda erected in Tawadehntha, over Mount Myemmoh, by the Tha-gyah, king of the Nat-dewahs. When Prince Theidat left his palace, his wife, and forsook all to become a Buddha, he rode as far as the river Anawma and leaped over it on his famous steed Kantika. Then he drew his sword, cut off his long hair and threw it into the air, where it remained suspended, till the Tha-gyah-min carried it off in a basket and had his Soola-manee shrine built over it. Hence the offering of fire-balloons.

Thus offerings are made on earth, water, and in the air. The whole month, from the full moon which ends Lent till the feast commemorative of the nogahna alms of Thoozata,

is distinguished by specially abundant a-hloo to the pagodas and to the behkkoo. A peculiarly pretty offering is that called a pan-teing, a pyramid somewhat like a pya-that, entirely composed of flowers in wreaths and nosegays, which is conducted with much dancing and sounds of music, to be laid before the great image. Fantastic tin shrines and lanterns made to hold big, two-inch thick candles, often plaited of long tapers made of different coloured wax, are presented, and along with these, huge monkish fans, each adorned round the edge with tags of gold-leaf and little pictures; big muslin dragons distended on hoops and long streamers to be hung from the poles surmounted with the sacred hentha, or the kalawaik, are also frequent. It is also customary at this season to make the monks large offerings of honey—pya-yee hloo-thee. This can hardly be called a separate festival, but as the honey is only given in these months, it affords sufficient cause for the exhibition of plays and energetic dancing on the way to the monastery.

All these religious observances, sufficiently mixed up with secular enjoyment, are accompanied by other occupations which cannot be said to have anything directly to do with religion. Such is the preparation of the boats, and the practice for the races, which always take place in Thadingyoot. They must wait, however, till Lent is over; and the racing boats are almost always kept under the houses of the yahans, so that even here there is ground for the assertion that all great public feasts in Burma are connected with religion. But the Burmans are very far from being sad worshippers, and any one who has been in the country in the months of October and November would be inclined to assert that the whole round of existence in Burma was made up of junketings and pleasure-parties.

## CHAPTER XXII

### NATS AND SPIRIT-WORSHIP

NOTWITHSTANDING that Buddhism has been the established religion in Burma since shortly after the third great council at Patalipootra in 241 B.C. (283 of the sacred era), and that the purest form of the faith exists, and is firmly believed in, yet, throughout the whole A-shay Pyee, both in Upper and Lower Burma, the old geniolatry still retains a firm hold on the minds of the people. Missionaries say that it is a natural revolting of the human mind against the denial of the existence of a Supreme Being, superior to man, and controlling his destiny. Government officers assert that the retention of the prior religion (for it is undoubtedly a kind of second religion) is due to the fact that surrounding, and scattered about among the Buddhist Burmans, are numerous tribes—Karens, Kachins, and others—who have no form of belief but nat-worship, the reverencing of the spirits of nature. As a simple matter of fact, it is undeniable that the propitiating of the nats is a question of daily concern to the lower class Burman, while the worship at the pagoda is only thought of once a week. For the nat may prove destructive and hostile at any time, whereas the acquisition of koothoh at the pagoda is a thing which may be set about in a business-like way, and at proper and convenient seasons.

Before proceeding further, it will be well to discuss the word "nat" itself. General Phayre and Bishop Bigandet have not yet settled whether Nat is derived from the Sanskrit term nath, meaning "master, husband, lord," or not. The question may be philologically interesting, but is

not likely to be definitely settled till the languages of "Farther India" are better known. What concerns us is the fact that "nat" means in Burmese two distinct kinds of individuals. It may be applied to the inhabitants of the six inferior heavens, properly called dewahs, who figure in Hindu mythology, and have thence been transferred to the Buddhist world system. Kings and virtuous people are rewarded with happiness in these six seats after a good life upon earth. The Tha-gyah min, the king of the nats, or dewahs, comes down to earth at the beginning of the Burman year, and remains here for three days, and his subjects generally display great solicitude for the pious state and welfare of mankind, but otherwise they are matters of no concern to dwellers in the loo-pyee unless as objects of envy. Perfectly distinct from these are the nats of the house, the air, the water, the forest,—the spirits of nature, fairies, elves, gnomes, kelpies, kobolds, pixies, whatever other names they have received in other countries. Burmans never have any confusion in their mind on the subject, such as may occasionally occur to a foreigner. The genii and peris of Eastern story, though doubtless springing from the Hindu dewahs, have no real analogy in Burmese literature, any more than the idea of the *devil* —etymologically connected with the word dev-a or dewah —has anything to do with the joys of Tawadehntha and Tohttheeta, the best-known heavens of nats of the superior order.

The worship of nats, of the spirits, then, has nothing to do with Buddhism, and is denounced by all the more earnest of the pyin-sin as being heretical and antagonistic to the teachings of the Lord Buddha. The late King Mindohn, who was a true defender of the faith, and possessed of a deeper knowledge of the Pali texts than many of the members of the Assembly of the Perfect, fulminated an edict against the reverence paid to the nats, and ordered its discontinuance under severe penalties, but the worship was never really stopped, and under King Theebaw's erratic rule flourished more than ever.

The term spirit-*worship* hardly conveys a proper notion. Even the Karens and Kachins, who have no other form of

belief, do not regard them otherwise than as malevolent beings who must be looked up to with fear, and propitiated by regular offerings. They do not want to have anything to do with the nats; all they seek is to be let alone. The bamboo pipes of spirit, the bones of sacrificial animals, the hatchets, swords, spears, bows and arrows that line the way to a Kachin village, are placed there not with the idea of attracting the spirits, but of preventing them from coming right among the houses in search of their requirements. If they want to drink, the rice spirit has been poured out, and the bamboo stoup is there in evidence of the libation; the blood-stained skulls of oxen, pigs, and the feathers of fowls show that there has been no stint of meat offerings; should the nats wax quarrelsome, and wish to fight, there are the axes and dahs with which to commence the fray. Only let them be grateful, and leave their trembling worshippers in peace and quietness. For the Karen all nature is filled with nats, every tree and stone and pool and breath of air has its spirit. The dead are only separated from the living by a thin white veil, through which, however, none but the gifted can see and venture to speak to them in words. So the Caffres leave an open space in their line of battle that there may be room for the spirits of dead heroes to join in the conflict and fight on their behalf.

The Burmans are naturally not so wholesale nor so demonstrative in their recognition of the existence of spirits. The yahans would not endure it, and Buddhism has at any rate a somewhat softening and reassuring power. Nevertheless evidences of the fact of the belief are universal and not to be mistaken, in all parts of the country, but more especially among the Talaings (or Mohns, in their own tongue) in British territory and north of Mandalay, in the neighbourhood of the geniolatric mountain tribes in Independent Burma. At the extremity of every village, the yua-sohn, there is a nat-sin, a shrine for the nat or nats of the neighbourhood. This varies very much in size and character. Sometimes it is a mere bamboo cage, hung in a peepul or other tree, or slung on a post, a bird-cage kind of construction, with an image inside, and a little hole through which the superstitious can introduce their offerings, tiny water-pots, oil-lamps, and

little morsels of food. Often, if the village is larger, the shrine is much more pretentious, assuming almost the size and appearance of a zayat, a large tectum or roof, gabled and supported with red posts, the platform ornamented, and with a dais at one end, on which a representation of the nat is placed at the feast time, which, in imitation of the pagoda festivals, occurs at a regular fixed season. At other times these images are kept stowed away in an adjoining chamber, built for the purpose. It is particularly irritating to an educated Burman to see these absurd figures, which remind one of nothing so much as the fetiches of the prognathous African. Two gaudily dressed puppets, masquerading with spire-like crown, and royal, sharp-pointed swords, represent the much-feared nats, Shway Pyin-gyee and Shway Pyin-ngè, the Nyee-daw, Noung-daw, the Royal Younger Brother and the Royal Elder Brother, who command much respect in the neighbourhood of Mandalay and in Upper Burma generally. A still more dreaded spirit is one whose representation figures in a shrine at Tagoung, one of the ancient capitals of the country, half way between Mandalay and Bhamaw. He appears simply as a head on a post, four feet high or thereabouts. A spire-like crown rests on his head, his eyes protrude and goggle in semi-globular wrath, asinine ears and a Punch-like nose complete the likeness, for he has no mouth, and his body is that of a dragon. Every one avoids his temple as much as possible, but the inhabitants of the village bow in that direction before they venture to do anything, and passing boatmen kindle lamps and offer flowers, of which he is said to be particularly fond, and fruit, for the nat has an incorrigible habit of giving people the stomach-ache when he is offended, and death punishes the recalcitrant. "Tagoung colic" is a recognised ailment with the Burmese faculty.[1]

First in the list of personal spirits may be considered the koh-soung nats, a kind of confusion of ideas between the proper spirit and the butterfly spirit, and representing as it

[1] The demon is said to have been one of the ancient kings of the place, who acquired his power from magical arts which he learned in Northern India. Three famous pagodas in the defile take their names from episodes in his life; and his two sons founded the dynasty of Prome.

were the genius of each individual, a kind of materialised conscience. They are twelve in number, six good and six bad, six male and six female, and regulate the life and doings of their *protégé* accordingly as the benevolent or the malevolent gain the upper hand.

Next to these comes the ehng-soung nat, very often called Min-mahgayee, the guardian nat of the house. For his comfort the tops of all the posts in the house are covered with a hood of white cotton cloth, for it is in this situation that he usually takes up his abode. In almost every house, at the end of the verandah in front, you will find a water-pot full of payeht-yay, water over which certain gathas, magic spells, or religious formulæ have been uttered by the astrologer, or the prior of the district. This water, which is replenished once a month, or oftener in cases of danger from disease, or when a member of the family is absent on a journey, is every now and then sprinkled about the house as a protection against beeloos and spectres, ogres and tasehts. When the water is consecrated in this nyoung-yay-oh, which is of a special shape, something like an overgrown Indian spittoon, there are always a few twigs and leaves of the tha-byay bin floating on the top. These are mostly taken out and hung round about the eaves, but occasionally left in the water. The inordinately superstitious sometimes keep a small tha-byay bin (the sacred eugenia) growing in a pot in the house, so that its benign influence may keep harm away. Talaing houses may usually be known by the cocoa-nut hanging up at the south side of the building. This is covered with strips and tags of yellow or red cloth, and is offered to Min-mahgayee, whom they call the king of the nats. Of these spirits (called kalook in their language) they say there are thirty-seven distinct varieties, but Min-mahgayee rules them all. At the beginning of the wet season they always wrap up the cocoa-nut afresh, and when the rains are over make new offerings of money, glutinous rice, eggs, jaggari, and fruit, in order that the ehng-soung nat may keep away fever from the household. It must not be supposed that the nat guardian of the house has necessarily any affection for those who have built the place where he has taken up his abode. He probably regards them only with cold indifference, however generous

they may be in their offerings, and were he not propitiated by these gifts he would almost certainly display his anger by doing the inhabitants some grievous injury. But then he dislikes his haunts being intruded upon, and if a stranger comes at an unwonted time—a burglar at midnight for example—it is quite likely that the ehng-soung nat will attack him violently, scare him out of his wits, or give him the colic. Thus without any really estimable purpose in his mind, Min-mahgayee may be a considerable protection to his worshippers.

Beyond this guardian, or demon of the house, there is the guardian nat of the village, the yua-soung nat, of whose shrine at the end of the town I have already made mention. None of the lower-class Talaings would ever think of eating a morsel without first holding up his platter in the air, and breathing a prayer to the village nat. They are particularly fond of putting up shrines to the nats under the le'pan tree, from the wood of which coffins are frequently made. A feast must be held every three or four years in honour of this nat, at which the nat Kadaw, a woman called the nat's wife, dances. This is done in order that sickness may be kept away. Should an epidemic actually break out, a very elaborate ceremony is gone through. Probably first of all the figure of a spectre, or of a beeloo, is painted on an ordinary earthenware water-pot, and this is solemnly smashed to pieces about sundown with a heavy stick or a dah. As soon as it gets dark, the entire populace break out into yells, and make as much noise generally as they can compass, with the view of scaring away the evil spirit who has brought the disease. This is repeated on three several nights, and if it is not then effective the yahans are called in to give their assistance. The prior with his following repeat the Ten Precepts, chant the Payeht-gyee, and then one of the sermons of the Lord Buddha is declaimed, the same by the preaching of which he drove away the pestilence which was devastating the country of Waythalee. If this last ceremony is not effectual the village is abandoned. The inhabitants leave the sick and the dying to their fate, and go off to the jungle, where each household camps out by itself for a time. Before they return again, the yellow-robed monks, in recogni-

tion of much alms, read the Law up and down the street between the houses. When they have gone back to the monastery, the nat's shrine is repaired, and abundant offerings deposited. Having thus made their peace with the representatives of both religions, the people return to their houses, light fires, cook rice for new offerings, and then enter upon their ordinary pursuits as if no interruption whatever had occurred.

This is what would take place in any ordinary Burman village. But among the Talaings, and in the more retired places in the jungle, occupied by ignorant uncultivated Burmans, the function called yua-hkya-thee would be carried out, which is much more purely geniolatric in its character. This is sometimes done when a prominent man in the hamlet is sick, more often when there is danger of a contagious disease. A great feast of cooked rice and meat, roasted fowls and ducks forming a prominent part of it, is heaped up on a platform specially erected for the purpose some distance outside the village. Everybody in the village is required to have some part in the ceremony. A few are sent out beforehand, who dress themselves up in a fantastic way, and pretend to be beeloos, evil nats, and witches. With them are others who feign to be dogs, and rush about on all fours, barking and howling; others represent pigs, and grunt and nuzzle about with their noses in the ground. After this performance has been carried on for a certain time, the remainder of the villagers come out in a band, and, through one or more spokesmen, demand of the possessed whether those lying sick at home will recover, and whether the bad spirits are satisfied with the offerings. It is specially ordained at these exhibitions that no one shall be called by his real name; such mention, if made inadvertently, would expose the person addressed to considerable danger, even if he should make no sign betraying himself, for he certainly would not answer. The quasi tasehts always reply that the sick will recover and the plague leave the locality. Thereupon the villagers rush off like madmen into the surrounding forest, and run about hither and thither in a reckless way with an open cloth, or the end of their waistcloth, in their hands. Some of them suddenly make a plunge with

their cloth over a bush or a tussock of grass, and then closing it up carefully, hurry breathless back to the village. The lehp-bya or "butterflies" of the sick man are supposed to have been captured. The pasoh, or cloth, is carefully opened and shaken over the patient's head, and the lehp-bya is supposed to return to its proper habitation. This operation is repeated several times, in case a wrong "butterfly" might have been captured, or lest the actual one should have escaped on the way. Then everybody returns. The function is not without its danger, for it has happened that the temporary mimes have become permanently possessed of evil spirits, and as witches and wizards have proved as great curses to the neighbourhood as any pestilence could have been. Which things are an allegory. The whole ceremony is beginning to get into very bad odour, and respectable people avoid having anything to do with it, while those who have taken a part are ashamed to own it. All these nats are directly connected with a particular locality, and therefore well known to, and regularly propitiated by, the inhabitants of that place. But there are abundance of nats to be found elsewhere, away from villages and houses, and all of them equally ready to resent any injury which the passer-by may unwittingly do them. When a Burman starts on a journey he hangs a bunch of plantains, or a twig of the thabyay tree, on the pole of the buffalo cart or the stern of the boat, to conciliate any spirit whose beat he may intrude upon. The fisherman makes offerings in his nat-sin every time he launches his dug-out; the lonely hunter in the forest deposits some rice and ties together a few leaves whenever he comes across some particularly large and imposing tree, lest there might be a thi'pin-soung nat dwelling there. Should there be none, the tied-back twigs will at any rate stand in evidence to the taw-soung nat, the demon who presides over all the forest. When there is a boat-race, the opposing crews have a preliminary row over the course with offerings placed on the prow for the nat who guards that stretch of the river. And so on through numberless examples. Some nats achieve fame, and are known far and wide by special appellations. Such is Moung Inn Gyee, a spirit who is feared in all the district round Rangoon, and away

eastward and northward as far as Pegu. He lives in the water, and causes death. A special festival is celebrated in his honour, or rather in deprecation, in the month of Wahsoh, the same in which Lent begins. Others more especially known in Upper Burma are Byindohn, Shway Pyin-Gyee and his brother, and a drunkard nat called Moung Min Gyaw, to whom great quantities of rice spirit are offered. Ooyin Gyee is a spirit universally known among the Talaings. The chief spirit of a district usually goes by the name of A-shin Gyee, the great lord, or, among the Talaings, Ohkkaya. Then there are generic names; there is the Hmin nat who lives in woods, and shakes those he meets so that they go mad. There is the Oopakah, who flies about in the clouds to spy out men whom he may snap up. There is the Akakasoh who lives in the tops of trees, Shekkasoh who lives in the trunk, and Boomasoh who is content with a dwelling in the roots. The presence of spirits or witches in trees may always be ascertained by the quivering and trembling of the leaves when all around are still.

The Talaings, and many of the Burmans in the Irrawaddy delta, have a regular nat-feast just before harvesting begins. The figure of a woman is fashioned out of straw, and a tamehn, kerchief, and other portions of female dress placed along with it in a bullock cart. Great quantities of kouk-hnyin, "sticky rice," are heaped up, and the whole driven in procession round the ripe paddy fields. The figure is then set up in the place where the paddy is to be stored, and the offerings are usually swept away by the boys of the place, whose appetites overcome their fear of the nats, Boomadee, the guardian of the earth, and Na-gyee, the guardian of the grain, to propitiate whom the feast is held.

There is a theory that persons who are executed or meet a violent death become nats and haunt the place where they were killed. They are called nat-sehn. Advantage is taken of this to guard the capital. When the town is founded, at each of the four corners of the city walls and under the gate-posts people are buried alive. Their spirits thereafter hover about the place and bring disaster on strangers who

come there with evil intentions. Monks and nuns who lead bad lives and break their vows are also believed to pass into demons when they die. There is therefore a constant and lamentable recruiting of the forces of the nats and tasehts.

In some places certain nats have qualities ascribed to them which are not entirely obstructive and obnoxious. For example, in a nat's house at Nyoung Oo, before the figure of a spirit called A-pay Shway Myo Sin, lies a twisted, curious-shaped stone, which has magic powers ascribed to it. The sick come and try to lift it up. If they are successful they will soon recover health; if, on the other hand, its weight is too much for them, the inquirers will die. Similarly, on the ascent to Mandalay Hill there is a little chapel in which, besides three figures of the hentha, the Brahminy goose, each said to contain a sacred tooth brought from Ceylon, there is a flat, oval stone, with mystic characters inscribed on it. Many resort there to ascertain the probable issue of an intended journey or enterprise. If the stone proves heavy, the sign is bad.

The belief in spirits naturally induces a corresponding faith in omens. The Dehtton, an astrological book constantly in the hands of baydin sayahs, but carefully excluded from all monasteries, gives a great variety of them; auguries from the flight and number of birds seen, omens from the barking of dogs, the movements of bees, and the laying of eggs by fowls. Rules are given for choosing the site on which a house is to be built, and omens drawn from the substances found in digging the foundations. Posts are called male, female, or a-thet ma shee, neuter, according as they are of the same girth throughout, larger at the bottom or in the middle. Under ordinary circumstances, houses with female teing are fortunate, with neuter disastrous. Posts which are largest at the top are called teing beeloo, "demon beams," and are especially unhappy.

If a hen lays an egg upon a cloth, its owner will lose money. To come across mushrooms at the beginning of a journey is a most fortunate sign. A snake crossing the path always denotes delay, whether in a lawsuit, a journey, or a warlike expedition. If a dog carries an unclean thing up into

his master's house, he may get thrashed for it, but the man will become rich; and so on in infinite variety.

All this belief in supernatural powers tends to produce abundance of experts who profess to be able to explain signs and to control the evil spirits. Every district possesses its nat thoo-ngè, or nat mehmma, a spirit woman who dances at the nat feasts, and at ordinary times is consulted by the superstitious on all kinds of subjects connected with her trade. She is asked where so-and-so, lately deceased, is, to what seat of the world he has migrated; where absent persons are, and what they are doing; what facilities there are for special undertakings, and when they should be begun.

The baydin sayahs claim similar knowledge, and are equally abundant. Numbers of them may be seen at any time of the day sitting under the trees on the way up to the Shway Dagohn pagoda, writing and rubbing out figures and letters on their black note-books, and drawing a comfortable income from an unfailing succession of inquirers. Sometimes such a magic-worker wishing to establish a reputation, or having a spite against somebody, performs the ceremony called pohnna-ga teikgyin. He carries off some cinders from the funeral pyres of people who have been burnt, and collecting a large assortment of such charred pieces of wood, puts them secretly in the house of the person whose feelings he wishes to work on. At night the spirits come and keep up a battery of stones on the unfortunate man's roof, all attempts to find out where the stones come from being as unavailing as they were in a similar instance in the suburbs of London not very long ago.

It is consolatory, however, to know that piety will protect any one from the attacks of malevolent spirits. Numerous stories told by the yahans prove the virtue of the gahtas to guard against evil. If the victim has only knowledge and strength of mind sufficient to recite these religious formulæ, the wiles of the nats are harmless. In case of the utmost need, even the ordinary tharana gohn, the payah, tayah, thengah, is of much avail, if only uttered with faith. It is with the idea of keeping away beeloos, tasehts, and demons that the members of the yellow robe are often summoned to

death-beds. There is no thought of the monk administering spiritual consolation to the dying man. The good influence of his pious presence keeps away evil spirits, and nothing more. No exhortations of the yahan can alter the balance of merit and demerit which is already cast up for the dying man.

# CHAPTER XXIII

## RICE CULTIVATION

ABOUT three millions of acres are under cultivation in British Burma, and of this total all but some three hundred thousand acres are devoted to the growing of rice. Tobacco, sugar-cane, cotton, and oil-seeds of different kinds, as well as fruit-trees, form the other crops. The alluvial lands of the Irrawaddy delta produce by far the greatest quantity of rice. This is due as much to the security in which the people now live as to any superior facility for raising the grain. It is certain that the best quality of rice comes at present from this part of the country, but this may be due to more practised agricultural skill or long-continued tilling of the land. Hardly any possible number of crops in a season could exhaust the fertility of the soil. Any part of the country, however, may be used for the cultivation of rice. The laziest farm is a swamp-land, where the ordinary rainfall is sufficient to produce the sodden ground requisite for a rice crop. Such low-lying plains and the riparian lands, annually flooded by the overflow of the river, are naturally best suited to Burmese indolence and are earliest taken up. Farther up the country, where the rain runs off the surface quickly and the land is too high for the south-west monsoon floods, it is necessary to resort to irrigation, either by the obvious method of dams or by ingenious water-wheels. Finally, there is the laborious toung-ya cultivation, where whole hillsides are cleared of trees to produce a crop. This hard work is left to mild aboriginal or other tribes, whom the Burman has long ago bullied out of the fat lowlands.

Malicious people have declared that the only things a

Burman does well are steering a boat and driving a bullock-cart. This is a libel; he can cultivate rice remarkably well. Unfortunately, however, as far as a vindication of his character as a worker is concerned, this does not imply any severe labour. Here the Burman is a victim of circumstances. So rich is the soil of his native land that it has only to be scratched to burst into plenty; the ploughing of the land cannot be described in any other way. The south-west monsoon, commencing early in June, soon reduces the ground to a soft sea of mud. When this has come about, the Burman proceeds to plough it. His plough is a single-barred harrow, or rake, with three long teeth of tough acacia-wood; a high bow or loop of bent wood rises from the cross-bar, and standing on this, the farmer is dragged backwards and forwards till the ground is reduced to a smooth surface—no very difficult matter. Oxen are frequently used, but more commonly the mud-loving buffalo, partly because he regards the toil as a pleasure, and partly because of his greater strength. Lazier farmers still adopt the primitive method of making the children drive the buffaloes and plough-oxen up and down in the yielding mud so as to poach it up well; and then a log of wood is drawn over it to smooth it down. None of the farms are large, the average being somewhere between ten and twenty acres; so that this work is soon over. Nurseries are prepared at the same time on somewhat higher ground, where the seed will not rot with excessive moisture, and here the grain is sown broadcast.

Agricultural operations are now suspended for a month or six weeks. By about the beginning of August the ploughed fields have become somewhat less fluid, and the plants in the nursery, called pyoh-kyè-lè, have grown to a fair size. These are then pulled up and carried off to the prepared lands. A kouk-seik-tan, or knobbed stick, is used to make holes in the ground at intervals of a few inches, and into each of these holes a couple of plants are inserted. This work is left to the women and children, many of whom prefer their hands to the stick. The farmer squats on one of the solid ridges, which intersect the ground and serve as footpaths, and with a huge green cheroot in his mouth,

leisurely contemplates the operation. Everything is now in the hands of nature, and the agriculturist may lounge round his farm in peace till November; unless, indeed, excessive rain floods the ground and rots the crop, when a new planting out has to be gone through. The harvesting is almost entirely done by men from Upper Burma. They work for very little, and it saves the farmer a good deal of time and dignity to get all the cutting done for him. Accordingly, from October till December the steamers down the Irrawaddy used to be crowded with King Theebaw's subjects, all of whom had to leave behind them with their Myo-sah, or his delegate the Myo-woon, who vicariously "ate" the township between them, a pledge either of property or of some member of their family, that they would return to their country again. When they got back, very little of their hard-earned gains escaped the voracity of the royal officials. These a-nyah-thahs, as they are called, behave remarkably well in British territory, notwithstanding the assertions of the rural police, who, being unable to detect dacoits, declare that these are all Upper Burmans who have come down for the harvest. They are really, however, mostly simple, quiet people, who are kept very much in awe by the bluster and town-knowledge of the down-country farmers, and work away zealously with their queer sickles, looking like the ordinary English article worn to half its original size by long use. It is worthy of notice that the grain is not mown close to the ground as in Europe. Very little more than the ears are cut off, and the straw burnt in the hot weather of March and April supplies a scarcely-needed fertilising to the soil. The reapers usually receive their payment from the farmer in grain, but they naturally convert this into money, or more portable goods, before they start off home again.

It does not take long to cut the crop, and then the corn is brought in to the homestead, commonly on rude sledges, more seldom in carts. The threshing-floor does not take much preparing. It is simply a portion of the field swept clean. It is sufficiently hard from the broiling sun, and a stake is driven into the centre of the circle. Two lines of sheaves are arranged round this, head to head, and the grain

is trodden out by slow-moving bullocks in good old lazy fashion. The Christian Biblical precept, not to muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn, does not fail of observance with the Buddhist farmer. Then the paddy, that is, the unhusked grain, is winnowed. In some places hand-winnowing machines of a simple pattern are used; but ordinarily a far more primitive and easy method, corresponding to the substitution of oxen for threshing-flails, is in use. A man stands on an elevated platform and capsizes baskets of paddy brought from the threshing-floor; the rice falls on a sloping bamboo mat and so to the ground, the wind blowing away a great part of the bits of broken straw, chaff, and light grain. The system may not be very thorough, but it saves an immense amount of trouble, which is the chief consideration. All that now remains to be done is to carry the grain off to the big rice-boat lying in the creek. There it is stowed in bulk; and after a day or two, the farmer makes a start, dropping leisurely down through the network of creeks into one of the main streams, and so making his way to Rangoon, or Bassein, whence he will return in a few weeks with fine Chinese neckerchiefs for his daughters and perhaps a gay Manchester pasoh or two for himself and his sons—unless, indeed, the Madras money-lender has snapped up all his receipts down in town, or some of the robber-boats that infest the creeks at this time of the year have pounced upon him and carried off everything but the boat and the paddles.

Rice-farming would be profitable as well as easy work were it not for the reckless squandering of almost all the cultivators. The average rent per acre is under three shillings; the average produce of the land per acre is from eighty to a hundred bushels in the more fertile parts, while elsewhere the yield is from forty to fifty. The selling price of rice per maund (80 lbs.) in Rangoon is between 4s. 6d. and 5s. Agriculturists, therefore, ought to grow rich. But they are too fond of gambling and building works of merit to accumulate money, and their carelessness results in the constant death of their plough-beasts, so that matters usually remain exactly at the same level if the farmer does not actually get into permanent debt. The Scottish Highlanders

have a pious wish, "May the free hand always be full!" If it is not always full in Burma it is consoling to think that it is seldom absolutely empty. Still, when the grandson succeeds he ordinarily finds that there is as little actual money hoarded up about the place as there was when the grandfather Poh Gyee spent so many borrowed rupees at his uncle's funeral.

If rice cultivation is easy work in the low country, it is very different with the toung-ya, or hill clearings. Here the dense underwood and forest growth has to be cut down; and the more there is to cut the better the crop, for the soil needs fertilising badly, and all that is cut down is burned. Work is begun about April; everything is felled, bushes and all; and after the fallen logs have dried some time in the sun, the brushwood is heaped up round about them and the whole is set on fire. Some of the logs smoulder for weeks —perhaps till the first rains come. Then the ground is rudely dug up with hoes, and the ashes turned in. Cotton-seed is ordinarily mixed with the rice, which is of a quite different variety from that produced in the plains. It is sown broadcast, and the farmer has thereafter only to keep down the weeds, but this is not by any means a light task. The crop is ready by October, and furnishes little more than enough to support the family or community. The scanty manure provided by the wood-ashes is not sufficient to last for another year; and when the crop is secured the party proceeds on to a new settlement, there to repeat the same laborious process. A very ingenious device for lightening the toil is resorted to where there is much heavy timber. Beginning at the bottom, they slightly cut the lowest trees on the upper side only, gradually increasing the depth of the notch as they advance up the hill, until at the top of the clearing they cut the trees completely through. These fall on the row immediately below them, and by their weight knock it down; and so the felling process is continued down to the bottom. Occasionally a tangle occurs where some sturdy tree refuses to fall, and the clearing it away becomes a matter of very considerable danger. This toung-ya system is very wasteful as well as laborious, and annually draws down upon itself the denunciations of the English forest

officers. But the hill-tribes who adopt it are too few to support themselves in any other way. They were long ago driven out of the plains by the Burmans, and now cling to their old nomadic life with a degree of obstinacy which Government officials, in a variety of ways, have found is not to be tempted by any tale of the present security and plenty of the low country. Rice, therefore, continues to be produced with the minimum and the maximum of labour; but none of the hill rice ever finds its way out of the country, and seldom even down to the plains.

The rice season, as far as the English merchant is concerned, commences in January and ends about May; but though this is pre-eminently the "busy season," there are purchases made in greater or less quantities all the year round. The relations between the great English rice firms and the simple jungle cultivators are not of a very elevating character, and it can hardly be denied that the fault lies wholly at the door of the foreigner. Missionaries in Burma are wont to mourn that their teachings are often rendered wholly nugatory by the want of scruple, and it might almost be said of honour, displayed by the great Rangoon rice firms. The good padres teach their proselytes that Christians are all honest and truthful. The ingenuous lads enter as clerks in a rice-mill and discover that Englishmen scarcely differ from the "poor heathen," except in being more lordly in the way of doing the thing.

Years ago, when there were not nearly so many mills as there are now, and not a quarter so many ships in the harbour during the rice season, things went on pretty equably. One day one firm would give a rupee or so more per hundred baskets, and the next day it would be another. But soon the mills began to increase in number and more ships came, and it was harder to get paddy. Then rival firms began to bid against each other. There was demurrage before their eyes, and it was terribly expensive work keeping the mill establishment up to its full strength. And so prices rose and rose until they became absurdly high, and no one profited but the hawks that preyed on the simple Burmese cultivators. Then the English merchants held a meeting,

and all pledged themselves not to give more than the current market rate for paddy. This seemed a fair enough agreement; but after a while it was found that the boats all gravitated towards one or two firms. A little investigation showed that this was due to the fact that though they paid the ordinary rate, according to the compact, they had a smaller measuring basket than their neighbours. Accordingly every one went on reducing the size of his basket until the system became as ruinously absurd as ever it had been before. Then there was another meeting, at which it was unanimously agreed that this state of affairs would never do, and that it was absolutely necessary to come to some definite understanding. A committee was appointed which, after some deliberation, concluded that, if, in addition to abiding by the market rate, every one were bound to use a basket of a certain fixed size, there would be no chance for unfair speculations. A standard basket was therefore fixed upon; and the competitors were supposed to start fair again. But in no very long time, one firm put a false bottom in the basket, another wedged in a board; and so on, till matters got back to the old way. This state of affairs is hardly creditable to mercantile honour, and it certainly is by no means profitable.

Independently of this, paddy has gone up in price at an alarming rate of late years. The first heavy rise was in 1877, at the time of the Madras famine. That was also the time of the resolution to have a standard basket. Rice was wanted in any quantity for the famine districts, and millers gave an altogether fabulous price for grain. The game went on merrily, introduced the scandalous "paddy morality," and lasted long enough to make the cultivators think the new prices had come in for good. Far too many Burmese farmers are heavily in debt to the "chetties," the money-lending caste of the Madras coast. The agriculturists have borrowed money to build a pagoda or a monastery; to give a grand feast on the occasion of their marriage, or their father's death; to buy a new yoke of oxen in the place of those that have been carried off by disease; to get seed-grain to sow their tracts of paddy land, the last season's gains having

been lost in some gambling transaction when they were down in Rangoon. They have got into the chetty's books in some way at any rate; and hapless is the man, Burman or Englishman, who has dealings with the fat, shaven-headed Madras money-lender. He will be charged eight, ten, twelve per cent a month, or even more, before there is an end of the transaction. The chetties, therefore, took a particular interest in the rise of the price of paddy. High prices ensured their being paid; moreover, handling such unwonted sums of money made the ever-careless Burman reckless. He gambled, he gave great feasts, he got deeper and deeper into debt with the money-lenders. Consequently it was desirable that the prices should not go down; and as men of business the chetties understood how that was to be done; they made the Burman farmers hold back their grain. The Rangoon firms were in desperation to meet their contracts, the ships could not be kept waiting; and so prices were maintained at nearly famine rates. This more than anything else brought about the unlucky leger-demain with standard baskets. The appearance of the chetty element in the trade upset everything. They are charming men of business, and know all about bulling and bearing, and all the other civilised expedients of trade. Poor "Jack Burma," listless and good-natured as he is, would never have thought of such things of himself; but he is in the hands of his master. Not a single village in the jungle, however remote, is to be found without its bare-backed money-lender. He hovers round the paddy nursery; he watches the men planting out the handfuls of half-grown rice; he makes the farmer hold back the threshed-out grain till he gives the word: then he fixes the rate and all but takes the money himself.

The English merchants have struggled against the system, but with small success. They have laid out heavy sums in advances. The farmer is paid for the next year's crop before ever it is sown. This is generally only practicable with men who have not yet fallen into the clutches of the chetties, and the result has been almost invariably to drive

them into the money-lender's arms. The Burmese, it is to be feared, have not sufficient stability of character. Oo Myine or Moung Poh never had so much money before in their lives as the advances figure to. They do not know the value of it, and proceed to squander the rupees forthwith; and so, long before the paddy is delivered they are heavily in the usurer's books, and then Moung Poh and Oo Myine have to do as they are bidden. Moreover, the system in any case could hardly be a safe one. The cultivator might die; there might be a flood, or a jungle fire; many things might happen, in fact, to prevent the advance boats from ever reaching the Poozoondoung creek. Consequently many English firms have given up the practice, and instead send agents away up the creeks, far into the jungle, to negotiate with the farmers on the spot and try to secure paddy before rivalry has had time to raise the price. But even this expedient does not answer well. The chetties do their best to throw obstacles in the way. It is not without expense, and it impresses the cultivators with a notion of the great demand there is for paddy.

The telegraph, they say, ruins business. The paddy season opens in February with a price of, say between seventy and eighty rupees a hundred baskets. The merchants declare they will not be forced into materially increasing this rate, and the home firms charter a number of ships. Meanwhile the price of paddy steadily rises, while rice in England steadily goes down; and by the time the vessels discharge their cargo in Liverpool or London, milled rice is not very much dearer in wholesale shops than the raw paddy in the Burmese boats. Very few of the rice firms are making any money just now; yet new mills are constantly being started—which would seem contradictory, were it not that all the firms starting them have business of another kind; teak sawmills, cotton or piece-goods trade, silks for Burmese men and maidens, or jute and grey shirtings for Upper Burma. Rice will certainly always be wanted, and there is any quantity of it to be had in Burma. Probably each firm hopes to outlast its neighbour; but in 1880, when there were constant reports of rebellions and disturbances in King Theebaw's territory, the local trade was brought to a stand-

still, and many a Rangoon firm looked as if it would fall; and a few actually did come down. The business will right itself in time, no doubt, but the precariousness of the trade is certainly no fault of the Burmans. A little more of the sterling probity which used to be associated with the name of the English merchant would do no harm in Rangoon rice dealings, and would win that respect from the farmer which heavy payments and cunning never will.

The following account of English dealings with the rice after it has got out of Burman fields and boats, is from the English point of view.

Rangoon is the largest rice port in the world. From January to May the river is crowded with shipping—huge iron and steel sailing craft that have been chartered beforehand, and carry off thousands of bags in their capacious holds; and a constant succession of "ditchers," as the steamers passing through the Suez Canal are called, which come "seeking," and seldom have to go away without their full complement of "five parts cargo rice," or "Europe milled." Harbour-masters and river-pilots have a busy time, and gather together many pieces of silver against the later months of the year, when they will have abundant leisure to spend them. Coringi coolies swarm in the town, and their monotonous chant, "Eh-ya-mah-la Tah-ma-lay, Madras Ag-boat Tah-ma-lay," may be heard at any hour of the night or the morning, floating over the river. The British sailor overflows into the town and sings noisy old salt sea-songs round about the Soolay pagoda, gets mad drunk on arrack, and not unseldom clears Dalhousie Street with a linked-arm rush, heedless of the red-turbaned guardian of the peace, who keeps out of the way in the meantime, but will break poor drunken Jack's head with his truncheon if he finds him helpless and strayed from his fellow-roysterers.

The Poozoondoung Creek, where all the mills are, is as busy as an ant-hill all day long, and all night too, when some of the mills are lighted up with Jablochkoffs, and the silvery rays shine ghastly on the black and bronzed mill-workers. Here we have the Madrasi coolies again, making noises, according to their nature, as a kind of assertion that they are doing hard work. The lank Chittagonian firemen, with

their aquiline noses, are coated with coal-dust, and divide their time between firing up and having a whiff at the hubble-bubble when Sandy, the Scotch engineer, is not looking. There is a cluster of Chinese carpenters, chipping away with their queer thick-headed axes and planes, which, with characteristic perversity, they pull towards them, instead of pushing away as other workmen do. Here is M——, the English "assistant" at the mill, his hat and coat all covered with rice-dust, which hangs in queer fashion on his eyebrows and moustache. He is in high spirits. "We've got twenty-four pair of stones going to-day, more than anybody else in the creek"; and he goes off to see how the Burmese girls are stitching up the rice-bags, a duty of which he is particularly fond, and over which he spends a quite unnecessary amount of time. There is R——'s voice on the other side of the creek. He is storming at some men in the cargo-boat, who have done something wrong—anchored in the wrong place, or not started for the upper mill at Kemmindine last night as they ought to have done. R—— has a voice which is the terror of every loitering coolie and dawdling boat-wallah in his employ; and he will be as hoarse as a North Sea pilot by nightfall, and will want a "double-barrelled" whisky and soda to moisten him before dinner. He wants company down to "the Point," and presently comes skimming across in his gig, manned by Chittagonian Kalassies, and we drop down the creek—they call small rivers creeks in the East—to where it joins with the main Rangoon stream. The Pegu river, tapping the country east and north of Rangoon, comes in at the same place; and there is a great crowd of paddy-boats here in the early morning. Each firm has its brokers, middlemen who make the purchases from the farmers that come down with their grain. They have been here since daylight, and fly about in their little dug-outs from one seller to another. The great point in a broker seems to be power of lungs and fluency in abuse. The amount of yelling that goes on at "Monkey Point" would silence the bookmakers' ring at Epsom on a Derby day.

R—— has not come down to this pandemonium for nothing. There are a couple of big ships in, which must be

filled, or there will be demurrage to pay, and a "canal-wallah" is expected this afternoon or to-morrow morning; so that the wheels must be kept going their hardest. Accordingly, we paddle about here and there, and whenever we come across the little canoe flying the flag that marks R——'s brokers, sundry signs pass, which result in three great paddy-boats mounting the red flag too. They presently weigh anchor, and drop up to the mill. R—— is a smart man of business, and is very scornful about the representatives of several other firms, who lounge on the bank, smoking cheroots, and throwing sticks into the water for their dogs to fetch out. It is not directly a matter of money that is in question. The cultivators know pretty well what they are about, though you might not think it when you hear a man refuse ninety-two rupees a hundred baskets, and afterwards settle with a broker for eighty-eight. Those passes with the finger on the nose meant a good deal more than appeared. Another brick in the bottom of the basket, a three-inch batten wedged in somewhere, was the significance of that wink which sent the broker off in such a hurry.

At last it is over. There are no more boats to be had; and we are not sorry to turn back, for the sun throws its beams fiercely back from the water in a way that gets below the broadest solah hat. R—— is in great glee: "Thirteen boats, by George! Next best to the Imperial Firm; and then there's the launch to come back." The Imperial Firm is the biggest concern in Rangoon, and has sometimes as much as a lakh out for "advance boats," *i.e.* money paid to cultivators before the rice has been planted out from the nurseries, or perhaps even before it has been sown at all. The launch about which R—— is so solicitous went away last night far up the Pegu River to intercept boats coming down with paddy for sale. There are sometimes great bargains to be made in this way. The boatmen have come a long distance, and are tired with paddling. The tide is making strong when the steam-launch comes up. There is the welcome prospect of an end to their labours, and above all there are no outbidding rivals to interfere. R—— instituted the system, and for a day or two had the game all to himself; but now the other firms have got wind of it, and

there are sometimes famous races for a big boat, which must somewhat astonish the simple jungle wallahs, and certainly do not reduce the demands of the hlay shin, the owner of the boat. R—— is in luck this morning. We have hardly gone a hundred yards when the "Mah Hlah" comes puffing round the point behind us, with a boat on either side, and three towing astern.

And now we have got back to the mill. The Burmans are discharging their paddy, which is stowed in bulk, into a big cargo boat. The regulation basket is in use, and we do not peer too inquisitively into the bottom of it. The owner of the boat is perched on the lofty carved stern of his craft, and placidly smokes a great cheroot. Presently he will come down and make his way to the office, where he will get a great pile of rupees to carry off, tied in the end of his pasoh. The greater number of them will probably find their way into the hands of the oily chetty, who is squatting on the bank there. The rest our hlay shin will most likely gamble away.

Meanwhile, a long string of coolies is carrying the paddy from the lighter into the godown, a gigantic shed, where there is already a mountain of grain. We skirt round it, and go to the other side. There a few hundred more coolies are running off with more baskets to the mill. The paddy is thrown into huge receptacles on the basement, winnowed, carried up in lifts to the top of the house, three stories high, where it is first of all passed over a long sieve. Here the stalks, leaves, stones, and stumps of cheroots are separated from the grain, which is then passed between two revolving stones, just sufficiently wide apart to grind off the outer husk without breaking the seed. Then it is rewinnowed in fanners, and passed over finer sieves, where the broken grains fall through, while the part-cleaned rice goes on to fresh stones. It is found that perfectly clean rice will not stand the long sea voyage, and the grain as it is sent in the sailing ship has still the inner pellicle, and is mixed with about twenty per cent of unhusked rice. This is what is technically known as "five parts cargo rice," or simply "cargo rice." Since so many steamers have begun to go through the Suez Canal, the amount of "white rice" milled in the province has been

steadily increasing. Rice of a specially fine quality, with a glaze on the surface, is manufactured for Italy. Clouds of rice-dust float all over the mill, and settle everywhere, making queer spectacles of the dark-skinned Madrasis. The dust is carefully swept up and sold to Chinamen, who fatten their pigs upon it. The milled grain descends to the ground-floor again, and pours in a stream through shoots into bags standing ready on weighing machines. There is a crowd of Burmese girls ready to sew them up as they are filled, and another band of coolies to carry them off in the cargo boats ready to convey them to the ships away up in the Rangoon harbour. Paddy that came in a Burmese boat in the morning may by night be safe stowed in the shape of milled rice deep down in the hold of a ship bound "to the Channel for orders." Everything is used but the paddy husk. That is passed out from the fanners, and pours in a great stream from wooden shoots into the creek. There it floats backwards and forwards with the tide, and creates miasma and narrows the river; still no other feasible means of getting rid of it has yet been devised. Several engineers and others in Rangoon have tried special furnaces for consuming the husk, but with no very great measure of success. Mr. Cowie's system is probably the best; but it requires a special kind of boiler and furnace, and has not as yet been generally adopted. The economy in fuel as well as the advantage to the river would be immense if the scheme were perfected.

And so we have seen the paddy sown out and mown, and passing from the hands of the cultivators, through the mills, into the great ships that carry the rice away to all parts of the world.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### A GRACIOUS PLOUGHING

LIKE the "royal elder brother" of China, the king of Burma ought to go out once a year to plough the fields. Theebaw Min did not do it during the first two years of his reign, and, as far as I am aware, was equally heedless throughout the later years also. The consequences ought to have been disastrous. According to tradition the failure of the Let-twin mingala to come off should have caused a drought all over the country. But the moh-hkoung did not ensue; on the contrary there was moh-koung: an aspirate makes all the difference between a water-famine and seasonable showers. King Theebaw went very little indeed out of his palace. The annals of the country supply too many instances of kings, who, having gone abroad, found on their return to the palace gates that a usurper had taken possession of the throne in the meantime, and had no better greeting for his predecessor than a short shrift and a red velvet sack in which to plunge his body into the Irrawaddy. This unlovable custom had great weight with King Theebaw; but it was unwise of him to entirely abandon so venerable a tradition as the Let-twin mingala. It was at this ceremonial that one of the earliest marvels in the life of the Buddha Gautama happened. The king Thoodawdana, with eight hundred noblemen save one, was ploughing the fields at the annual festival. Many country people came to see the great sight, and the city emptied itself. The maids who had charge of the little Prince Thei-dat laid him down under the shade of a tree and went to look on. The infant Buddha rose up as soon as they were gone, and sitting cross-

legged in the fashion in which he is ordinarily represented in the images, became sunk in meditation. The careless maids all through the hot afternoon forgot about their princely charge, until the returning crowds and the setting sun reminded them of their neglect. Then they hurried to the tree and found that the Zampoo tha-byay had maintained its shadow in the exact same position all day as it was in when Prince Thei-dat was first laid down. Notwithstanding the arc the sun had described the shade had all along hung over the head of the meditating Payah Aloung.

The festival has therefore special reason to be celebrated by the descendants of the solar kings. It was also in every way a most picturesque fête, pleased the people, and offered a valuable opportunity for squeezing money out of them. The late king, Mindohn Min, never omitted it, even when he was grown old and portly, and little able to follow the slow-stepping bullocks. The ceremony took place in the beginning of June, about the time when the south-west monsoon usually breaks in Mandalay. The order went forth that the king would come out on such and such a day, and the people were enjoined to get ready. Not to see him—far from it. The right of a cat to look at a king in Mandalay is not well established. The Amehn-daw was issued in order that the heads over ten houses, the Tsè-ehng-goungs, might see that the road in their district was in proper repair, and that the yazamat had not got out of order. The yazamat, or king's fence, was a kind of lattice-paling put up in every street in the walled town, and in any of those in the suburbs through which the king was likely at any time to pass. It was formed of thick diagonal spars made into hurdles, which were lashed to heavy posts sunk in the ground at regular intervals. The whole was whitewashed, and often flower-pots stood on the top of the posts to enliven the structure a little; and it certainly wanted enlivening a good deal. The lattice-fence undoubtedly looked very neat and tidy, as a long, straight road lined with Lombardy poplars does; but it became terribly tiresome, when you found all the streets looking exactly the same, with this six-foot-high heavy wood fence standing within a couple of feet or so of the walls of the houses, and shutting out all view of these

wooden structures. It has, however, to be kept in constant repair, and the house-reeve has to go round carefully to see that none of the whitewash has been rubbed off, nor any of the transverse bars sprung with the sun. Behind these the entire populace must stay when the king, or any one of the queens, goes out. Woe betide the wretch who is caught outside them when the procession has started. He may consider himself lucky if he escapes with only a belabouring from the fasces of the shrieking lictors. No one is supposed even to look through the little diamond-shaped holes. As a matter of fact they do; but by way of condoning for the offence, they render it more difficult by planting flowering shrubs between the bamboo houses and the lattice-work.

The procession on the route out to the let-ya, the royal acre, to be ploughed, is magnificent. The king is clad in all his robes of state: the pasoh with the doung-yohp, the peacock sacred to royalty; the long silk surcoat, or tunic, so thickly crusted with jewels that its colour cannot be seen; the tharapoo, the spire-like crown, also a mass of precious stones; the twenty-four strings of the Order of the Saluè across his breast; and over his forehead the gold plate, or frontlet. The great gates in front of the stairs from the Hall of Audience are opened for him. Except the King of the Golden Throne no one may pass through them; there is the low red postern at the side for meaner beings—a shrewd device to make every one bow his head to the palace, whether he likes it or not. His majesty mounts the white elephant, which none save he can ride—for is not the noble creature a king himself?

The king mounts the Lord White Elephant at the palace of the latter, to the right of the Hall of Audience; but the princes and ministers, all of whom come to attend the great function in their robes of state, may not enter their howdahs till the stockade of the nandaw has been passed. Then they fall into line in order of precedence, the woons and woon-douks wearing their official mitres—tall red velvet hats, with the top curled back like a nautilus, and the base surrounded with a row of gilt spear-heads. The long crimson velvet cassocks edged with rich brocade are also worn, and every

one parades all the umbrellas, gold, or vermilion, or green, that he is entitled to.

Thus they pass through the official town into the suburbs. The road taken is that by the east gate, whence, in a line with the steps of the Hall of Audience, a broad way runs straight away to the blue Shan hills ; or at least to where, in the late king's reign, the great Yankeen-toung pagoda was being built, a few miles from where the hills rise, steep as out of a lake, from the flat rice lands. A death-like stillness prevails after the procession has passed the two timber guard-houses, between the tall columns of the eastern gate, surmounted by fantastic, triple-roofed teak pavilions, looking like Chinese joss-houses with their flamboyant carvings. The people are no doubt all there—we speak as those who know—crouching on their stomachs and peeping as best they can through yazamat and leaves of the bushes and legs of the soldiers that line the royal path all the way, striving their utmost to get a glimpse of the king and the splendour of his retinue ; but they are not to be seen, and no one so much as sneezes. Thus the richly carved and gilt royal monastery is passed on the left ; and immediately afterwards comparatively open ground is reached, stretching out on either side of the high, raised road. A little farther on, half a mile or so from the eastern gate, a halt is made at the selected portion of the let-daw-gyee. Ploughs stand ready in a long row, extending away as far as one can see ; for all the princes and ministers must plough as well as the king. The royal plough is thickly covered with gold-leaf ; the part on which his majesty stands—for it must not be forgotten that the Burmese plough is something like a giant rake, and is not really a plough to English ideas at all—is gold, roughened with pearls and emeralds. The milk-white oxen that draw it rival the Lord White Elephant in the splendour of their harness. Crimson and gold bands hook them on ; the reins are stiff with rubies and diamonds ; heavy gold tassels hang from gilded horns. The gold-tipped ox-goad his majesty wields is covered with jewels and flashes like a rod of fire in the sun.

The king ploughs a couple of furrows—or, rather, passes the big rake once up and down the rain-sodden field—and

then stops; for he is portly, and short of breath now. The ministers, no matter how fat they are, have to go on ploughing as long as the Arbiter of Existence chooses to look on. At last he declares that enough has been done, and preparations are made to go back again. He doffs his royal robes, for the tharapoo, with its spire and jewelled ear-flappets, is burdensome, and the long surcoat, with its thousands of precious stones, is said to weigh about a hundred pounds. The Lord White Elephant is relieved too. He stalks back unencumbered, with his household of thirty retainers fussing about him with fans and swaying umbrellas.

The king gets into an open car, something like what Roman racing chariots are represented to have been. It is of course adorned as richly as everything else, and is drawn not by ponies or bullocks, but by men, eight of them pulling at each of the flexible shafts. The object is to prevent any one, the driver for example, sitting higher than the king. The English carriages presented at various times to different Burmese monarchs met with little approval. At first it was thought that the king was to sit on the box; but then it was found that with this arrangement there was nothing for it but that the driver should run by the side and therefore maintain a constant erect attitude in the presence of royalty. When it was found that the king was supposed to sit inside, with the driver two or three feet above him, a burst of indignation suggested that it was an insidious plot to put an insult on the majesty of the lord of the umbrella-bearing chiefs. For a time the vehicles were put away as lumber; but an ingenious handicraftsman adorned them with pya-thats—five-roofed ecclesiastical, or royal spires. They were now, when drawn by men, suitable for royal occupation; but unfortunately the solid teak-wood spires made them top-heavy, and especially unstable on rough Mandalay roads. They have therefore degenerated into paraphernalia for exhibition on a kadaw day, or gauds for a procession at Tawadehntha feast time.

The king consequently returns on his low, gilt, native-made carriage, reclining on a mattress placed on the floor. He is now dressed in the ordinary national way, with a light linen jacket and a slender paw-lohn (a fillet of book-muslin

wound round the head), showing the thin white hair tied up in a little knot on the top of the head. The chief ministers are round about, fanning him assiduously; and he is in extreme good-humour, chaffing the Kin Woon-gyee, the astute prime minister, on the way he let his bullocks straggle away at random and the difficulties he got into in trying to turn them at the end of the field; while the stout old Naingan-gya Woon-douk is rallied about the absurd state of heat he was brought into by his exertions. Possibly, if a venturesome and inquisitive subject were to be seen now, the king might pardon him for his rude gaping. But nobody knows in what temper the king is, and the silence is as death-like as when the party moved out. As soon, however, as the great procession has passed and has wound its way into the palace, the hitherto deserted streets are crowded again. Pwès begin with startling suddenness at every corner. Bands strike up; long lines of candles illuminate the streets at nightfall; rockets are let off, fire-balloons ascend, and every-thing is given up to rejoicing; for the let-daw-gyee has been graciously ploughed, and the let-twin mingala is a presage of abundant crops.

## CHAPTER XXV

### A HARVEST FEAST

ONE of the pleasantest and most social of Burmese country festivals is the ceremony which goes by the name of Tamanè Htoh-thee. It occurs in the month of Ta'soungmohn, or of Na'daw, when the harvest is over and the first of the new rice piled up in a heap near the farmer's house, or perhaps stowed away in the capacious bottom of the hnaw, the big rice-boat, with its stern rising ten or fifteen feet above the surface of the water, and ready to start for Rangoon whenever its owner shall have hit upon a lucky day for commencing the voyage. In order to acquire a store of merit as well towards the next existence as towards the journey immediately in view; to back up the verdict of the astrologer from the horoscope with the good wishes of the holy men of the monastery; and, above all, to have a feast such as generally comes in somewhere in all Burmese religious proceedings, the cultivator resolves to give away twenty baskets or so of rice in alms and presents to the yellow-robed monks and his neighbours. A special kind of rice is always used on these occasions. Englishmen generally are unaware probably that there are a great number of varieties of rice, and that they differ very much in their flavour. Most people imagine that all rice has the same taste (no taste they would probably say); and distinguish in a rough material way between Patna rice, which is very small, and Rangoon rice, which is considerably larger in the grain, and finally Carolina rice, which is bigger than any of them. A Rangoon merchant would go a little farther, and say that there are two varieties—the nga-sehn, which he likes best and gets most of, and the nga-

kyouk, which comes in more sparingly. But beyond these—and they are not the varieties most in favour with the Burmese for their own consumption—there are at least thirty different kinds. There is the byat sabah, the "tray" rice, which is considered the best, but like most of the other sorts, will not stand the rough treatment of the steam mill-stones, and breaks in pieces. Then there is the myee-shay, which has a long awn, and the myee-tohn, which has no awn at all; the toung-pyan, "winged rice," and the nga-chwè, "buffalo grain"; and so on through a long list, ending up with "black rice," which is not by any means bad eating. But of all the kinds, kouk-hnyin, "sticky rice," is the variety always used at the harvest feast. It is mixed with thin sliced cocoa-nut, sesamum seeds, ginger, onions and pepper, all stirred together and well boiled; and the resulting mess is called tamanè. The rice is well named. It is very emphatically sticky, and even when taken alone is not very easily digested; but when it comes in the form of tamanè, the result is usually a widespread attack of colic throughout the village. This, however, comes after the festival, when the fun is all over, and does not concern us in any way.

When the farmer has made up his mind as to the day on which he is going to have the feast—a date which, of course, cannot be settled without consulting the wise men of the village and much pondering over the palm-leaf horoscope—he sends out a few boys with a number of packets of "pickled tea" to all the young men in the place, requesting them to be good enough to eat it and to come without fail that night to his homestead in order to help him to husk his rice for the tamanè htoh-thee. A few girls are also asked to come; and they bring their friends for the sake of company, and the mothers follow for the sake of propriety. Thus there is quite a large assemblage at the farmer's when night falls and the business is to commence. There is a good deal of preliminary tea-drinking and smoking of cheroots and chewing of betel and le'hpet, and a great deal of laughing and talking. The girls profess to be astonished to find so many young men there; they had not imagined their host was meditating such extensive preparations, and thought there would be nobody there but his own and his wife's younger brothers.

That is exactly what they will say next week when they attend a similar assemblage at Htohn Oung's house at the other end of the village.

But after an hour or so they settle down to do a little work. The young men—kahla-thahs, they call themselves—"Corinthians, lads of mettle"—have brought with them a number of wooden mortars, with a heavy pestle working on a lever; and these they set up and commence to husk the rice. The process is very simple. A few handfuls of the paddy are thrown into the mortar, the workers step off and on the lever which raises and lets fall the solid wooden pestle, and the husk is every now and then blown out and the grain stirred up a little. The Burmans infinitely prefer rice husked in the national way to that which is sent out from the European steam-mills. The big Derbyshire or composite stones do their work only too effectually; they take off not only the hard shell, but also the inner cuticle of the grain, which contains the chief flavour; and, moreover, the heat which the steady grinding induces, scorches out a great deal of what taste remains. Therefore at every house there is to be found the primitive national apparatus in which the girls of the household every morning or evening prepare the rice for the day's consumption. But to-night they are relieved from such hard work. The village youths for once in a way exert themselves; and all the girls have to do is to wash out a few dishes and prepare the bamboo-lacquered platters, the pyramidal okes, in which the tamanè is to be carried to the yahans and the pagoda to-morrow, and get ready the palm-leaves in which less exalted people will receive their modicum of the stew. The whole actual work might be finished in little over an hour, but that is the intention neither of the giver of alms nor of the assembled young men and maidens. They have come much more for merriment than for merit. Else why that great pile of le'hpet? For the condiment is an anti-soporific, and if you take enough of it, you will be able to see all through a forty-eight hours' play, and give your friends an outline of the plot before you lapse into a slumber lasting twice round the clock.

Accordingly, after a quarter of an hour's work, the "prince" of the local amateur dramatic company jumps off his perch,

and commences the "White Dove" song from the Zawta-gohmma melodrama, which the old sayah at Pegu has just brought out, and which is having a tremendous run all through the low country. The song is about the Saddan mere, the lake of the Lord White Elephant, where golden lotuses flower perpetually, where the gorgeous yin-dwin bird sails on the silvery waters, great butterflies flap about with painted wings, and sip the nectar of the fabled jasmine, and peacocks stalk proudly on the jewelled margin, while around roam elephants white, red, and black in happy security. The singer has hardly finished when the loo-byet, the village jester, breaks in with a travesty of the whole thing, mocking at the tremolos and the lofty style, and taking off the peculiarities of the singer. He went out to a lake too, and launched a canoe on it, but he was capsized by a huge creature that came up from below; and then he found that he had got into a slimy buffalo wallow, out of which he only escaped after great peril from the horns of its three outraged owners, who butted him under the surface many times; and at last, when he crawled out, he was so brown and dirty that some passers-by took him for a hermit, and gave him some rotten plantains in alms. Before the "prince" has time to show any bad temper, a girl commences a coquettish ditty, somewhat after the fashion of the English "Paddle my own canoe," about a poor wife whose husband comes home and storms and growls and abuses because there is no rice ready cooked, softens down when he has crammed himself with curry and rice, but breaks out into grumbling again at night because his wife cries and will not go to sleep. Such tyranny the young lady declares she will never expose herself to, or at any rate "she'll be no submissive wife." Then there are a few love-songs, wherein the girls are compared with the maids of the palace in Mandalay, and the Mandalay girls generally (who are *ex officio* pretty) with the daughters of nats, with Madee, the model wife of Waythandaya (the prince who in his next existence became the Lord Buddha), with flowers and stars and gems, and whatever similes lovers all the world over are in the habit of making. The swaying of the body as they walk, the turning in of the elbows, the fragrant powder on their cheeks and necks, and a few other items which

would not commend themselves to a Western admirer, are recorded with enthusiasm and delighted precision of detail; and when an hour or so has been passed in this way, a little more rice-husking is done, and the girls set to work getting ready the onions and sesamum seed, and slicing up the cocoa-nut kernels. This sort of thing goes on all the night through. There is half an hour's work, and then an hour of singing and story-telling and gossip; about the great Shin-bin-tha-young, the gigantic recumbent image of Shin Gautama dug up lately near Pegu; of the two min-loungs, the embryo kings, who have been revealed there, and the third one, who is foretold by the old theht-sah, the prophecy which declares that he will restore the ancient Talaing kings and revive religion; of the new htee which is being set up on the pagoda of the lotus tank, and its exceeding splendour, each single one of the concentric rings having been assigned as a particular favour to one out of many competing districts. Then there is a discussion as to the new fashion of turbans, the one plain colour with worked flowers on it, which has supplemented the old thinner style with more braid-like patterns; and the present rage for waist-cloths with many-coloured stripes in place of the old wavy and dog's-tooth fashion. Then the girls are rallied about the method in which they dress their hair—all of them in the style just declared treasonable in the upper country. Queen Soo-payah-lat has hit upon some particular set, or plaiting of her tresses, which she thinks becomes her very well, and a royal order has come out making it penal for any meaner damsels to adopt the same method. Consequently all the maidens from Toung-oo to Kyouk-Hpyoo and the A-eng Pass to Malawoon have made up after the queenly model and flatter themselves that it is *chic*. There are always ghost stories at these gatherings, tales about the three farmer brothers that were killed just after harvest time three years ago, and now haunt the dense patch of swampy jungle down by the creek as nat sehns, and sometimes scare the fishermen out of a night's work by the violent agitation of the tree tops on a still night; and then there is that old hag in the lone house at the far end of the village, who is certainly a witch; it must have been she who gave the old sikkè the tet, poor old

man, and he a payah-tagah too, founder of the pagoda on the slope of the "Brother and Sister Hill"; and there is little Mah Mee; the old beldam looked at her over the fence on the fifth of last waning, and the poor thing lost her sweetheart before the change of the moon, and had all her fine false hair stolen only three days ago: proof enough that of the *jettatura*.

It is long past midnight, when all the cocks of the village crow together, deriving their knowledge of the exact time from the diet of burnt astrological books, pecked at by their ancestors long ago, when the objection to cabalistic works was much more violent than it is nowadays; and sometimes daylight is coming in, and the sound of the morning chant steals over from the monastery, when the party breaks up and all go home. The kouk hnyin has been all husked, and, mixed up with the other ingredients, is simmering away over the fire. Every one has a virtuous consciousness of having gained considerable koothoh in addition to having spent a very agreeable time. Few go to sleep. They have eaten too much le'hpet for that, and in an hour or two, some of them will be wanted again to take the tamanè round. That is done about eight o'clock in the case of the monks. The farmer himself and his family carry it to the monastery in the spire-shaped lacquer-box, and having paid the usual reverence, deposit it before the superior, who looks on calmly without a word of thanks, or even the semblance of a recognition, but says before they go, that if they keep the Ten Precepts and live virtuously, they will escape the Four States of Punishment and be delivered from the Five Enemies. Then the "supporters" wheel on the right, and depart home to make up the portions for all their friends and neighbours. These are usually taken round by the girls, who go in bevies of three or four, dressed in their finest clothes and with flowers in their hair, and deliver the dainty with compliments, and injunctions to eat it immediately. By six o'clock in the evening, when the sonorous wooden bell of the monastery is summoning in all the scholars, the entire village is asleep; and they do not get up very early next morning. Nobody in the whole place has been drunk; and if there is an opium-eater in the village, he was not asked to the feast and had none of the tamanè.

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# CHAPTER XXVI

## SILK-GROWING

REARING silkworms, though a very profitable occupation, is not looked upon with any favour in Burma. To get the silk the pupa must be killed; and the taking of life in any form is an impiety always looked upon with great horror by all good Buddhists. Silk-growers are classed together with professional hunters and fishermen. The Four States of Punishment yawn for them, and their portion will be in the lowest abyss of the lowest hell. Still there are colonies of silk-growers in various parts of the country; but they live apart from the rest of the inhabitants as a rule, and often have entire villages to themselves. Colonel Horace Browne, who more than any other Englishman has taken an interest in the ways and occupations of the districts under his charge, states that the cultivators near Prome, where more silk is produced than in any part of Burma, are nearly all Yabehns —a race of the same stock as the Burmese, but despised by them independently of their crime in the way of habitually taking animal life. So much has the cultivation of silk become identified with them, that to Burman ears the term Yabehn is virtually synonymous with that of silk-grower. They usually live on the hillsides, occupying themselves like the poorer Burmans and Karens, with toung-ya cultivation; burning the forests on the slopes and sowing the ground thus enriched with the wood-ashes, with rice, cotton, or oil-seed. The system is viewed with very little approval by the government officials, for the toung-ya soil, hardly exhausted by the single crop raised off it, immediately produces a dense shrub-growth of no use to anybody, certainly not to the foresters.

Silk-raising is therefore encouraged as a means of stopping the ruination of the timber. It is a very simple matter, involving the least possible amount of toil, and at the same time being on the whole very profitable. Moreover, the Burmese mulberry-bush, which is quite distinct from the ordinary *Morus Indica*, does not grow well on the alluvial soil of the low lands, while it flourishes on the hillsides, where the Yabehns mostly live. The silk obtained from the caterpillars fed on the leaves of the hill-shrubs is very much better than that obtained from the mulberry-bushes of the plains. Thus it happens that all parties are likely to be pleased. The English Government foresters will gradually find means of putting an end to the timber burning which they detest; the richer Burmans down in the lowlands will neither have the temptation to increase their income at the expense of their piety, nor will they have that piety shocked by an organised system of taking life; while the Yabehns in their own hill-villages will be allowed to do as they please, and will accumulate tidy sums of money into the bargain.

It is certain that neither the silkworm nor the mulberry-bush are indigenous in Burma. It is said that the first cocoons were brought from China in the reign of King Anawrata Saw. Others again maintain that the Chinese taught the Shans, the Shans the Karens, and these the Burmese. In some places among the more superstitious hill-tribes the mulberry-tree receives a kind of worship. In any case it is more probable that both the silkworm and the tree were introduced from Western China, down the valley of the Irrawaddy or the Salween, than that they came over the hills, through turbulent mountaineers, from India. The shrub does not grow much more than ten feet high, and seldom produces good succulent leaves for a longer period than three years. After that the plants are apt to get coarse and stringy, and the cultivators ordinarily abandon the plantation, or root out the bushes and plant new ones. As the shrub will not flower it is propagated by cuttings, and new shoots are constantly being planted so that there may be an unfailing supply of young and fresh leaves. The Burmans call it the poh-sah-bin, "the tree the silkworms eat." There is another tree—that from the bark of which the coarse paper

used for the para-baik, or note-books, is got—the leaves of which the caterpillars will eat ; but the silk thus obtained is much coarser, and recourse is had therefore to the ma-hlaing-bin only when the mulberry-bushes give out. In any case, however, it is undeniable that, as yet, the silk produced in Burma is of a very inferior kind. It is rough and coarse ; but it is all the better suited for the strong lohn-gyees and pasohs in use for ordinary every-day wear among the people, the finer fabrics all coming from China or Manchester.

The whole process of growing the silk is of the simplest possible character, and is exactly suited to indolent people who have no conscientious objections to the killing of the pupæ. Silk, can, indeed, be spun from the cocoons, out of which the moths have escaped ; but it is very much coarser even than the ordinary silk, and commands somewhat less than half the price. Except the occasional trouble of strolling out for a few leaves, there is almost nothing to be done ; and the whole operations are carried on in the rickety bamboo hut of the cultivator, within a yard or two of the place where his food is cooked. The caterpillars do not seem to care a bit for the smoke or the dirt ; and the pupæ are equally callous to the fumes of tobacco which circle about them constantly during the few days that remain to them before they are stewed. The female moths are placed upon pieces of coarse cloth, with palm-leaf lids put over them. The eggs stick to the cloth, and form a compact little circle. A day or two over a week suffices to produce the larvæ, and these are then thrown upon flat trays, made of strips of bamboo plaited closely together, and guarded by a slightly raised edge. For four or five days the little caterpillars are fed on finely-chopped mulberry-leaves, the tenderest that can be found. After that they change their skins, and, beyond getting plenty of leaves, do not receive much attention. They are sturdy creatures, and they would need to be, for they are often very roughly treated. The trays are scarcely ever cleaned, and if the larvæ are to be shifted from one tray to another, they are scraped up in handfuls and thrown down as if they were so many chips of wood. Gauze, or mosquito netting is usually thrown over the trays to keep away the ichneumon flies, which otherwise would deposit

their eggs in the silkworm's back and kill him. In about a month's time the caterpillar is full grown. He is then bundled into a fresh tray, in which there lies, wound about in the form of a spiral, a narrow-plaited bamboo strip. The ripe larvæ are thrown into this with as little ceremony as if they were pebbles. In about a day's time they have spun their cocoons, fastening them to the strips of bamboo. These are torn off and kept in baskets for a day or two, when a pot with water in it is filled with the pupæ, and then set to simmer over a slow wood fire.

From a triangle over the pot is suspended a small bamboo reel, and down below, near the pot, is a wooden cylinder. The reeler is usually a girl. She fishes about for a time in the simmering vessel, and, catching a few threads of silk, passes them over the reel and down to the cylinder, to which they are fastened. She then turns the handle of the cylinder, winding on the silk, and at the same time constantly fishing up and fastening on new filaments, which she does by means of a light bamboo double-pronged fork. Not the least trouble is taken to keep the silk clean. Any rubbish that may be floating on the surface of the water is wound on to the cylinder without an attempt being made to disengage it. When all the silk has been got off the cocoons, and wound on to the cylinder, the pupæ are taken out of the water and fried in oil to furnish a dish for the family dinner. They are not by any means unpleasant, tasting, barring the oil, very much like roasted chestnuts; and indeed the dish is considered a great dainty.

The silk-growers mostly sell their silk. A loom is to be found in almost every Burman's house in the country; and in Prome and Shway-doung, as being close to the place where the silk is produced, great quantities of articles of dress are made for sale. The native-grown silk is only used for every-day clothes of simple patterns, the more elaborate being all worked from imported Chinese silk. The silk is bought raw, the separate filaments twisted into a thread by means of a wheel, and then made up into hanks; these are boiled in soap and water, and are then ready for the dye. The commonest colours are green, yellow, orange, different shades of red and light blue; black and dark blue are only

in favour with the Shans. The dyes are obtained from various jungle seeds, roots, flowers, leaves, and barks; the yellow dye obtained from the wood of the Jack-tree (*Artocarpus integrifolia*) being reserved for the monkish robes. After being dyed, the thread is unwound again. The weaving machine is very much like the old hand-loom still occasionally seen in out-of-the-way parts of England. The operators are almost always young women, and they are very clever at working the treadle and shooting through the shuttle, while talking all the time to village gossips or admiring swains. Some of the tamehns, made for the richer women, are extremely intricate in pattern and require between twenty and thirty shuttles. The treadle raises and lowers the alternate threads of the warp. Except the rough dresses and the most complicated in pattern, however, not many native-made clothes are worn now. The townspeople prefer the showy and cheaper imported articles, and, though the Manchester goods are too frequently "doctored" and do not last long, yet this does not trouble the Burman much, for he is fond of a change of dress, and, unless he is very poor, will never wear a pasoh, except about the house, after it has been washed. All the more elaborate designs are, however, native made. The "dog's-tooth" pattern is almost confined to Mandalay court looms. The a-chit pasoh or tamehn, of a complicated, wavy, sprigged design, which middle-aged Burmans remember as being the cherished object of desire of their young days, is now considered rustic. Young Rangoon will tell you that you may always know a taw-thah (a jungle wallah) at the pagoda feast by his wearing an a-chit pasoh and nothing else except his turban; and although the waist-cloth may cost from 150 to 400 rupees, that does not redeem it in the town-bred youth's eyes.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### LACQUER WARE

FOR a long time it was assumed that Japanese and Chinese lacquered goods were simply papier-mâché. A popular fancy for the ware has brought to the knowledge of all who care for the information that it is really wood of different kinds painted over with the juice of the urushi tree. Should fashion ever inspire a similar enthusiasm for Burmese productions of the same kind, it is probable that it may be supposed that these also are composed of solid wood, and people will wonder at the extreme thinness and flexibility of the finer specimens. But it is only the coarsest ware which is thus produced. All the better boxes and cups are made of a woven basket-work of strips of bamboo; the varnish used on them is, like the Japanese lacquer, the sap obtained from the stem of a tree, and has nothing whatever to do with the insect-produced lac, such as English varnishers employ in solution with alcohol. I am not botanist enough to know whether the urushi (*Rhus vernicæfera*), the Japanese tree, is identical with the Burman thi'see (*Melanorrhœa usitatissima*), or even whether it is of the same genus or order. Thi'see (literally wood-oil) is dark in colour from the moment it is gathered, whereas the urushi sap is described as being light yellow when first extracted, and only turning black after considerable exposure to the air. The urushi has been cultivated by royal order for hundreds of years in Japan, but in Burma no one troubles himself much about national manufactures, and the thi'see-bin grows wild in the jungle; and not even near Nyoung-oo, where nearly every household in the town is occupied in the trade, not even there do I

remember seeing a regular plantation of the tree. Nevertheless it is plentiful enough, and affords a magnificent spectacle when it is in flower—a huge forest tree covered so thickly with creamy-white blossoms that the leaves cannot be seen. The flowers have a fragrant scent not unlike that of apples, and the needy and practical Burman often makes a very acceptable curry of the buds. In full-grown trees the average height to the first branch is thirty feet, and the ordinary girth six feet from the ground is nine feet. Charcoal-burners have a predilection for the wood, which would not meet with approval in Japan ; and it is much used for anchors and tool-helves, being very close and fine-grained. It is too heavy to float when green, but dried it is not particularly weighty. The sap may be collected at all times, except when the fruit is on the trees, from Pyatho to Taboung—the first three months of the English year. Then it is thin and does not produce such a brilliant polish. The mode of collection is simple enough. Incisions are made in the stem, and the sap trickles into bamboos placed to catch it. When it is to be kept any time there must be a depth of two or three inches of water on the top, otherwise it would dry up and become solid. The water, however, does not improve it. The best varnish, called thi'see a-young tin, is that which has been just drawn from the tree ; the second quality contains twenty-five per cent of water, the inferior as much as fifty.

The articles lacquered are chiefly drinking-cups and betel-boxes, the latter consisting of a cylindrical inner case, in which are fitted two or three trays for holding the lime, betel-vine leaves, cutch, nuts, and other ingredients for betel-chewing, the whole covered by an outer lid reaching to the bottom of the inner case. Ordinary kohn-itt, betel-boxes, are three or four inches high and two and a half to three in diameter. Articles of the same shape are made of all sizes up to a couple of feet or more in height, these last being used for holding clothes and women's working materials. The bee-itt, ladies' toilet-boxes, are often the most delicate and carefully worked. The actresses always carry splendid specimens about with them to contain their combs, oil, scent, the white lead and thana'kha for the complexion, and a few

tresses of false hair. Other articles are the pyramidal tamin-sah oht, used for carrying food to the monasteries and the pagodas, fashioned somewhat in the style of the sacred spires of five or seven roofs, and of all sizes from eighteen inches to the huge things, the height of a man, which the king sent under the royal umbrellas to the Arakan pagoda in Mandalay. Byat, platters of all sizes, up to the gigantic circular tray as big as a small table, used for dishing up the family dinner, are always made of wood, like the Japan ware. The people do not think much of them, and they are therefore almost always quite plain, either black or red. There is no inferiority to the Japanese in capacity for sketching fantastic designs. The future may see great developments in this branch of the art, but at present it is practically untouched.

The process of manufacture is as follows: Little basket-like boxes of the required shape and size are woven of fine bamboo wicker-work, upon round chucks of wood prepared and firmly fixed for the purpose. The bamboos used, which are usually split and cleaned by the women and children, are of different kinds, that called myin-wah being the most highly esteemed. Similarly, the yet, or woven basket-work, is of different degrees of excellence, the kyoung-lehn-yet being the finest. Some of the Shans and better workmen at Nyoung-oo are celebrated for the delicacy of their work. On this is then evenly applied with the hand (so that the slightest particle of sand or dirt may be at once detected) a coat of the pure wood-oil. This is then put away to dry—not in the sun, which is apt to pucker and blister it, but in a cool airy place. Some careful workmen have often an underground room prepared specially for the purpose. After three days it is quite dry and hard, and is then liberally and evenly covered over with a paste called thah-yoh. This is made in a variety of ways, the commonest being a mixture of finely-sifted teak sawdust, thi'see, and rice-water. But instead of the sawdust, or often mixed with it, finely ground bone-ash, or paddy-husk burnt and strained through a cloth, is kneaded in. In the coarse, common articles for every-day use, tempered clay and some other materials are often used; but this being thicker and less putty-like, is

apt to scale and come off in flakes, especially if at all roughly used. This thah-yoh is allowed to dry quite hard, and the box is then fastened to a rude lathe, which is turned with one hand, while the other is employed in polishing the box. This smoothing-down is effected with sifted ashes, or sometimes with a piece of silicious bamboo, which is as good as fine sand-paper. When this is done the box is ready for a fresh coat, which almost invariably consists of a mixture of finely-powdered bone-ashes and thi'see. This, after drying, is polished in the same way as before. We have now a box of a brilliant, glossy black, in itself very pretty and fit for use anywhere. But this is only the end of the first stage; none but the byat and common wooden platters are left in this state.

The ground colour of the great majority of the boxes and cups is red; but some of the black wood-oil is required to rise through it and define the pattern. This is effected in a most ingenious way. The black box is put on the lathe again and turned round, while the lines and spots, and the form of the black pattern generally, is sketched on with a soht, or split stile, charged with thi'see. The drawer has no guide but his eye. There is no preliminary mapping out, yet a practised hand will never make a mistake and spoil a box. The fresh thi'see thus put on stands up above the general level of the surface. The whole box is now covered with red paint; and when this is dry the box is put on the lathe again, and the operator turns it round and rubs it steadily with ashes. By this means the red paint is removed where the lines of thi'see rise above the general surface, and the black pattern stands out clearly on the red ground. A quaint chequer-work is also always produced, where the slightly projecting edges of the bamboo wicker-work raise the black wood-oil through the vermilion layer. Still, however, it is not finished. No box is complete without three colours; and this last shade is applied in an equally simple and effective way. The desired pattern is incised with a graving-tool called a kouk—often nothing more elaborate than a pin firmly tied to a piece of stick. Then the whole box is coated over with the new colour, and this is in its turn polished off on the lathe till nothing

remains but the lines of the engraved pattern. If another colour is required, a similar process is gone through.

When the design is complete, a clear varnish of another vegetable oil, called shan-see, with a dash of thi'see in it, is applied all over as a last touch, unless indeed a very high polish is required. This is effected by rubbing gently with the powdered petrified wood found so useful in imparting a gloss to the alabaster images. The patterns are none of them very intricate, and are handed down as heirlooms from father to son, so that the same family will have all its ware made on a few clearly-defined models, and there is no fear of "spoiling a set." The invention does not as yet soar beyond scroll-work and line-figures of infinite variety; but should a foreign demand spring up there would be no lack of skill to meet it; just as the Rangoon tattooers have taken to copying pictures out of the *Graphic* on English sailors' breasts.

The supreme test of excellence in the manufacture is when the sides will bend in till they touch without cracking the varnish or breaking the wicker-work. Connoisseurs can discriminate between Shan, Nyoung-oo, and the ware of other places, by the shadow thrown on the inside (which is varnished plain red or black), when the cup or circular box is held at an angle of forty-five. Three colours only are used besides the black groundwork; but variety is produced by graduating their intensity of shade. They are red, green, and yellow. Red is prepared from finely-ground vermilion mixed with shan-see. The Nyoung-oo people prefer a vermilion called hinthapadee yuè, prepared by themselves, to that procured from China and used elsewhere. The home-made stuff seems to be much brighter in tint. Myay-nee, red ochre, is used only with the coarsest work. For yellow, yellow orpiment is ground down and washed several times until a pure, impalpable powder remains. This is mixed with a pellucid gum, and when required for use, worked up with shan-see. Green is obtained by adding finely-ground indigo to the yellow orpiment until the required tint is obtained. Red and yellow are, however, always the predominating colours.

The thi'see is turned to a variety of other uses besides

the manufacture of lacquer-work; applied to wood, or to marble and clay images, it enables them readily to take on gilding. It is used as a waterproof varnish to all the umbrellas in the country, and makes them as impervious to rain as if they were made of wood, while it protects the palm-leaf against the rays of the sun, which otherwise would burn it as brittle as an egg-shell. All the racing and war-boats in Burma are painted with it, and the best caulking in the world could not make them more water-tight. Finally, boiled down thick it furnishes the material for delineating the square heavy characters of the sacred kammawah-sah, the ritual for the admission of brethren to the sacred order.

The oil is usually put in the sun for a short time before being used, and it is at first of a light brown colour, soon darkening into a brilliant black. It seems to be of a particularly mordant character, and raises huge blisters on the hands of some people, leaving marks of the ashy-white colour suggestive of leprosy. Hence strangers suspected of being afflicted with the terrible malady always declare they are thi'see workers; and many people avoid these latter, in case they might find they had been holding communication with an outcast. A lotion composed of fine teak-wood sawdust, mixed with a little water, is used as a cure for blains. Many of the workmen periodically swallow small doses of the wood-oil, under the impression that it acts as a preventive. The capriciousness with which the varnish acts, leaving some men quite unharmed and punishing others severely, has given rise to a proverb in Nyoung-oo :—

> Thi'see is a witness
> To a burgher's fitness;
> If bad, he's marked an outcast;
> If good, not long can doubt last.

# CHAPTER XXVIII

## NGA-PEE

THERE are few articles of food which meet with more energetic denunciation than the favourite Burman condiment, nga-pee, which means literally pressed fish. The frogs of France, the rats and puppy dogs of China, the diseased liver of the Strasburg *pâtés*, the "ripe" cheeses of most European countries, and the peculiar character of game in England, with its occasional garniture of "rice," all meet with condemnation from those who dislike such dainties. The smell of nga-pee is certainly not charming to an uneducated nose, but the Backsteiner or Limburger cheese of Southern Germany is equally ill-calculated to evoke approbation on a first experience. An old herring barrel smells strong, but there is nothing in nature that more than nga-pee hath an ancient and a fish-like smell. Travellers on the steamers of the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company are wont to rail in no measured terms at the fish-paste which forms an invariable and obtrusively evident part of the cargo, yet no Burman would think a dinner complete without his modicum of nga-pee, and it is a noteworthy fact that one form of the condiment is of frequent appearance on English dinner-tables in the East, under the name of balachong, a term borrowed from the Straits Settlements, but which designates nothing more nor less than a specially prepared variety of nga-pee. In the same way there are equally various opinions with regard to the celebrated Durian, a fruit found as abundantly in the Tenasserim province as in the islands of the East Indian Archipelago, and equally highly prized by Burmans. Some Englishmen will tell you

that the flavour and the odour of the fruit may be realised by eating a "garlic custard" over a London sewer; others will be no less positive in their perception of blendings of sherry, noyau, delicious custards, and the nectar of the gods, while a somewhat objectionable smell is regarded as doing no more than suggest, or recall, a delightful sensation. I am not aware that any Englishman has been equally enthusiastic with regard to balachong, but there is no doubt that nga-pee sehn-sa ["raw-eaten fish-paste," so called because it is fit for consumption without being cooked] is identical with this much used substitute for anchovy sauce, and is often brought direct from the Burman bazaar by Madrasi butlers, who declare it has come all the way from Penang, and charge correspondingly.

Of nga-pee there are three main kinds—nga-pee goung, toung-tha nga-pee, and nga-pee sehn-sa. Each of these has its special varieties, getting their names from the township where they are prepared, or from the species of fish used in their manufacture.

Nga-pee goung, or whole nga-pee, is the most prized and the highest in price. That made at the village of Payah-gyee, in the An-gyee circle, not far from Rangoon, is celebrated from the rocky promontory of Modain, with its golden pagoda, to the barren solitudes of Mogoung, the Burmese Siberia. It may be made from any kind of fish, but the varieties preferred are the nga-koo, an amphibious, slimy fish, found in ponds and ditches wherever there is plenty of mud, and something under a foot and a half in length; and the nga-gyee, a fish very similar in general appearance and size, but called by the English the scorpion-fish, and very much dreaded for the wounds it causes with the pectoral spines. The great object in the preparation is to keep the fish quite whole, not so easy a matter as would at first appear. The process is as follows: A great mass of the fish, some of them only half dead, are thrown together into a big wooden mortar, and a man stands over them and works about with a curious cleaner made of a bamboo, the end of which has been slit and frayed into a kind of stiff brush. By this means it is surprising how soon the fish are scaled, and how effectively it is done. The larger specimens are, however,

almost always cleaned by hand, the shoulder fins and the tail being also removed. They are then thoroughly rubbed with salt and tightly packed in bamboo baskets, each of which is well weighted down. They are thus left for from twelve to twenty-four hours, the superfluous juices of the fish straining out at the bottom. Then they are cautiously taken out one by one, well rubbed with salt again, and laid out on a mat in the sun to dry. On the second day they are equally carefully packed away in huge earthenware jars with abundance of salt between the layers of fish. These jars are then put away—no easy matter with some of them, which might have served to conceal the forty thieves of the *Arabian Nights*—in as shady and cool a place as can be found. Gradually the liquid rises to the surface and evaporates by degrees, leaving a layer of solid salt on the top. Sometimes this fish-brine becomes alive with maggots, when the fish have not been sufficiently pressed, or have not had enough sun. When this occurs the liquid is drawn off the top and more salt is added, but in no case are any of the fish rejected. Usually the fish are ready for the market in a month's time, and will keep as long as may be wanted. They are eaten roasted, or fried somewhat in the same way as the "Bombay ducks," well known to the Anglo-Indian gourmand; sometimes also they are made into curries, the cook taking as great care as the manufacturer to keep them quite whole. The salt used is in many places, such, for example, as the An-gyee township, made on the spot. The soil there is strongly impregnated with salt. Water is run through it after the ground has been ploughed. The water is then collected in a tank, whence it is taken to pots, placed over furnaces, and evaporated to dryness, and the salt obtained is piled on sloping boards so that the bittern may run off.

A specially esteemed variety of the nga-pee goung is that called the nga-tha-louk, after the fish of the same name, the hilsa, or "Indian salmon," which would be perfect, were it not supplied with bones all through its body, seemingly utterly irresponsible and unconnected with the spine. This handsome fish, silvery, shot with purple and gold, is not scaled, nor are the head, tail, or any of the fins removed. Each fish is cleaned and rubbed with salt in the usual way

and exposed to the sun. Then they are spread out on the floor of a shed on mats, and mats are also put over them, and on these are placed weights of some size. This is all that is required. In four days at the outside they are ready for sale, and are then handled with most reverential care by both buyer and seller, for the hilsa is a fish that the foreigner loves, and therefore always commands a good price.

The second kind is that called toung-tha nga-pee, that is, pounded fish, or fish-paste. It also frequently goes by the name of damin nga-pee, from the bamboo trap in which the fish are usually caught. This is the form of nga-pee which has earned the bad name for the whole preparation. It is made almost exclusively from shrimps and the smaller kinds of fish. These are spread out as they are caught, without the addition of salt or any cleaning whatever, on mats in the sun. There they remain for two, or perhaps three, days—by which time their condition is better imagined than closely investigated. They are then thrown into a huge wooden mortar and pounded together, with a liberal addition of salt. It does not take any very heavy work or length of time to reduce them to a state of mash, in which one fish is not to be distinguished from another. The whole is then heaped up in a great mound under a shed near the house, and several hollow bamboos, with little holes here and there in their sides, are thrust into it. Out of these a liquor, called ngan-pyah yay, runs, and is carefully collected in jars set there for the purpose. This, as well as some other fishy oils, is greatly esteemed for culinary purposes, and fetches a good price. When these juices cease to run freely, the fish-paste is ready for sale, and is dug and shovelled out in an unceremonious way, contrasting very markedly with the loving care taken of the "whole fish nga-pee." In the country boats it is usually carried in bulk, piled up as corn, or salt, or commodities of a like nature might be loaded; and therefore a boat which has once been used for this purpose is easily known again. In English steamers it is, of course, packed in jars, but the odours are none the less fragrant on that account. This is the true and only mode of preparation, and the marvellous tales related by some foreigners of the burial of the fish in the earth for periods varying from a

week to a year (!) are due either to a guileless nature, or a too powerful imagination. The soil of Burma needs no manure.

The fish most sought after for damin nga-pee are those belonging to the family of cat- and dog-fish, from the circumstance that they have no scales, and therefore make a smoother compound. Some of these attain a huge size, the tame dog-fish at Theehadaw, above Mandalay, being quite five feet long, and blessed with mouths that would take in a leg of mutton. Many of them also have the peculiarity of breathing air, rising to the surface of the water and opening their mouths for the purpose; while, when the inland pools dry up after the rains are past, they are capable of making long journeys overland.

Sehn-sa nga-pee is made entirely from prawns, and comes chiefly from the Tenasserim coast, Beht (the English Mergui) and Tavoy being the centres of its manufacture. The prawns are spread out on mats in the sun as soon as caught and left there till they are fairly well dried. Then they are mashed up by hand, abundance of salt being added, and are stirred up several times a day regularly for three days, lying out in the sun all the time. After that, the paste is ready for use, and is packed in small jars. Properly, sehn-sa is that made from the prawns exposed immediately after being caught. When some hours elapse before they are spread out to dry, the resulting nga-pee is called yet-pyan; and if a whole day elapses before the exposure, yet-oht. The greater the delay, the more powerful the smell and the more piquant the flavour—a fact for Englishmen to remember when they take balachong. Ket nga-pee is simply a variety made of large prawns, which are heavily pressed in baskets called ket, before they are put out in the sun to dry. They are then pounded with salt and pressed again, after which they are ready for consumption, either as they are or after frying.

Notwithstanding the open disfavour with which the English regard nga-pee, the Burmese hold by it as the most savoury and necessary portion of their dinner, and vast quantities are exported to Upper Burma, where the manufacture, owing to the smaller fisheries, is not equal to the demand. The indignation which a crusade against the

condiment by a young civil officer with more zeal than discretion caused in 1880, will not soon be forgotten. Cholera was rather bad in Yandoon, one of the great places for nga-pee, and the Assistant Commissioner, convinced that the heavy smells must be the cause of it, issued an order forbidding the manufacture of the fish-paste, or its sale in the public markets, as well as that other cherished but strong-smelling dainty, prawn-head oil. The result was an avalanche of petitions to the Chief Commissioner, and something very like open riot in the town. Equanimity was not restored till the too energetic official was removed to another station, and the loo-gyees pointed exultantly to the fact that as soon as they began to make up arrears in the way of nga-pee consumption, cholera left the place. Nevertheless, Yandoon is not a charming place of residence to a man with a sensitive nose.

Fishermen are promised terrible punishments in a future life for the number of lives they take, but popular sympathy finds a loophole of escape for them. They do not actually kill the fish. These are merely put out on the bank to dry, after their long soaking in the river, and if they are foolish and ill-judged enough to die while undergoing the process, it is their own fault. Nevertheless, some strict people hold by the doctrine of the Manichæans, who asserted that the soul of the farmer migrated into herbs so that it might be cut down and thrashed out. The baker becomes bread and is eaten. The killer of a deer becomes a deer ; of a fish, a fish ; and so on. But nevertheless, if all the fishermen became monks one day, the next would see some of the pious trying their hands with the cast-net.

# CHAPTER XXIX

## PLAYS

THERE is no nation on the face of the earth so fond of theatrical representations as the Burmese. Probably there is not a man, otherwise than a cripple, in the country who has not at some period of his life been himself an actor, either in the drama, or in a marionette show; if not in either of these, certainly in a chorus dance. It would be wrong to say that there is no other amusement in the country, but it is indisputable that every other amusement ends up with a dramatic performance. When a Burman is born there is a pwè; when he is named there is a pwè; when a girl's ears are bored; when the youth enters the monastery; when he comes out again; when he marries; when he divorces; when he makes a lucky speculation; when he sets up a water-pot; builds a bridge; digs a tank; establishes a monastery; dedicates a pagoda, or accomplishes any other work of merit; when there is a boat or horse race; a buffalo or cock fight; a boxing match, or the letting loose of a fire-balloon; a great haul of fish, or the building of a new house; when the nurseries are sown down, or the rice garnered in; whenever in fact anything at all is done, there is a theatrical representation. Finally, there is a pwè, as grand as his friends can make it, when the Burman dies.

The plays are always given in the open air, and any one that pleases may come and look at them, and stay as long as he likes without paying, or being expected to pay, a single pice towards the expense of the performance. A large shed has indeed been erected in Rangoon, nightly performances take place, regular troupes are engaged for a

definite period, and money is charged for admission ; but the idea is an English one, and opposed as it is to ancient custom and the old free attractions elsewhere, meets with barely enough support to keep it going. The giver of the pwè simply constructs a small roofed enclosure for himself, if the pwè is held on open ground, and fits it up with a bedstead covered with mats as a kind of private box, with a few chairs and plentiful mats round about it. To this reserved space he invites a few of his most intimate friends, sending them the ordinary little palm-leaf packet of pickled tea by the hands of his daughters or sisters. All other places in the circle are open to the first comer, and when a pwè is announced, women may be seen early in the afternoon strolling down, with rolls of mats on their heads, to secure good places. Abundance of refreshments and materials for smoking are taken, for it will be sunrise before the play is over. The commonest place for a pwè, however, is in the street opposite the giver's house. All traffic is unceremoniously stopped. There is nothing to be done but to hoist up the hinged front wall of your house, or throw open the windows and go out on the verandah, if the construction of the building is more solid, and there you are with the theatre come to your doors. There is no trouble with the stage. A circular space is covered with mats and it is all ready. This is called the pwè-weing. In the centre is a branch of a tree, or the stem of a plantain palm stuck in the ground, which goes by the name of the pan-bin. Yule and others have endeavoured to discover some forgotten meaning for this centre of action, comparing it with the altar of the old Greek stage, but probably it never had any greater significance than to mark the centre of the arena and prevent the audience from crowding in too much so as to curtail the space. The actors when questioned about it always say that it is there to represent a forest, such as forms part of the scene of action in every play. This of course is merely an answer, and not an explanation. Europeans of an inquiring turn are apt to complain of this Burmese (and Scotch) method of supplying information. Why such a phantom attempt at representing a forest should be made, when no effort aims at portraying the

palace which is of equally regular appearance in all zahts, is not by any means evident. The property box of the company indeed serves as a throne, but this is an accident, and if there is no property box, there is no throne. The people take up positions long before the performance commences, and no doubt the pan-bin serves no deeper purpose than to indicate to intending spectators where the action will take place, and where therefore they may deposit their mats without being turned out later for being in the way. Further than the central tree and the mats nothing is required till the play begins. Then round about the pan-bin are arranged, as footlights, a number of small earthen pots filled with petroleum, usually the thick black crude oil brought from the wells at Yaynan-gyoung. Bits of rag or cotton seed are used for wicks, and the cups are replenished by the actors as occasion may require during the progress of the play. They are freely used throughout by both performers and audience as a means of obtaining lights for their cheroots. It is somewhat trying to the dramatic sense when the princess of the piece after a prolonged ngo-gyin, a dolorous wailing for her sad fortunes, driven from her love and strayed far in the jungle through devious paths to the immediate neighbourhood of beeloos, ogres, ghouls, and horrid creeping things, when thus forsaken and finishing off with the sense of an impending danger, she proceeds to light a great green cheroot, and placidly blow great clouds till her turn comes again. No less startling is it, when in the middle of a sonorous declamation from the king a half-naked youngster scuttles across the stage to get a light and scrambles back again. Englishmen, not understanding the progress of the play, notice these things more than anything else, and get an impression that the whole thing is ludicrous and unreal. This is very far from being the case. When the Yeendaw Mah-lay, the Mandalay *prima donna*, sings, or when the famous puppet player, Moung Thah Byaw, is performing, there is not a sound, the whole great crowd, and it must not be forgotten that the performance is in the open air, is hushed to its farthest limits, and not till the passage is finished does the usual buzz and chatter begin again. Those who have heard

it will acknowledge that this spontaneous tribute must be as gratifying as the loudest stamping of feet and whistling on fingers of a London theatre. In fact a Burman might perhaps be justified in doubting the enthusiasm and admiration which finds vent in whistling.

The acting as a whole cannot be said to be satisfactory. The circumstances are against it. Who could "lose himself in his part" in the centre of a crowd of people all smoking and often talking? Moreover the subjects treated are so romantic and remote from ordinary worldly events that no one can be expected to realise them. Finally, who could keep it up for ten hours at a stretch? Nevertheless, individual passages are occasionally wonderfully well done. The piteous wailings and desolation of the princess; the majesty of the king; the grim savagery of the demon, are often very effectively delineated, while the clowns are almost invariably exceedingly clever. They are chosen for their ready wit, many of the jokes being extempore, as well as for their power of facial contortion. Caricatures of the performances of the other actors and comic songs form their chief stock-in-trade, and the text of the play is very far from being adhered to. It is an undoubted fact, if scarcely complimentary, that the clown has much more to do in the play and is very much broader in his jokes when Englishmen are present than when there is a purely national audience. The prolongation of the comic parts is due to a courteous desire to please the visitors, buffooneries being much more readily understood than high dramatic art, while the coarseness is unfortunately due to the same impression which makes a Burman always produce brandy and beer for the refreshment of a white man, the idea namely that that is what he likes best. None of the higher class troupes, more especially those from Upper Burma, will, however, condescend to this sort of thing.

The company is almost always made up in Mandalay. There are Lower Burma troupes, but it is usually taken for granted that they cannot be better than second-rate. The delta Burman is firmly persuaded that "far birds have fair feathers." In their humble phraseology they say, "In the Low Country we are not up in the humanities." This is

not exactly complimentary to longer English rule and civilisation, but in one sense it is true. In Upper Burma every one is taught in the monasteries, and having no other relief from Pali doxologies, becomes saturated with the phraseology and ideas of the zahts. Thus, from the theatrical point of view, the Mandalay youth starts with a distinct advantage over the Lower Burman who potters away in lay and elementary Government schools over addition and multiplication and the sterilities of the First Reader. To qualify for the first ranks, therefore, the ambitious Peguer starts for the Royal City of Gems, practises as much as he can there, and watches the most celebrated players. Then, after a time, he obtains an engagement, and turns up in Rangoon as a quasi a-nyah thah. The stage managers, usually old actors who have made some money and are inclined to take their ease, go up to Mandalay during the rains, when comparatively little is doing, the wet, combined with the four months of Lent, making pwès few and far between. There they cast about and get together a company, entering into a written engagement with the actors, male and female, for the season, which lasts about seven months, from Ta'soungmohn to Nayohn (roughly, November to May). The manager makes all arrangements, and usually takes up his headquarters in some town or large village whence he can easily move to the surrounding places where the company may be wanted. The salaries paid are very good. A first-class prince or princess commands from 800 to 1000 rupees for the season. A good loo-byet, or jester, will get five or six hundred. After these come the actors who take such parts as the king or the maids of honour. The dancers, that is to say, those who simply dance and do no more, get about sixty rupees; the seingthama, the musicians, receive forty. The company have not more than two or three rehearsals together before they commence their tour, but this does not matter much, because every one knows his part well, and the cue is not a matter of supreme importance. The zaht-oke, the manager, draws all the money from the performances. As much as 450 rupees has been paid for a two-night performance. This, however, was exceptional, and it was a marionette play with the great Moung Thah Byaw in the prince's part.

Very few people could afford so much as this. The best engagements are those known as a-hloo pwè, given by a rich man in celebration of some religious festival, or to commemorate some event in his family, such as the donning by his son of the yellow robes of the monastery. The elders of the village, or the custodians of the pagoda, often collect money for the performance of some of the religious zahts, depicting avatars of the Lord Buddha. Then there are subscription pwès, where some energetic lover of the drama suggests the propriety of a play to the inhabitants of the village, or of a street in the town. He goes round gathering subscriptions, and then negotiates with the zaht-oke for as many nights as the manager is inclined to give for the money. This system has unfortunately led to abuses. Sharp individuals have discovered the possibility of collecting three or four hundred rupees among the people, paying the manager two hundred out of this, and keeping the rest for themselves. The dodge has been too often tried in Rangoon, but in the smaller towns it is still practicable, and is far too often carried out. Besides these performances by accredited companies, there are others called kyee-gyin pwè, given by professionals anxious to make a name for themselves, and for this purpose giving gratuitous exhibitions. These are naturally very uneven from the difficulty of getting a complete company together. But in all cases the vast majority of the spectators pay nothing at all. The guests invited by packets of le'hpet usually contribute a rupee or two towards the expenses of their host, but otherwise the entire cost is defrayed by him.

The pwè is begun by the arrival of the band, which, with characteristic Burmese disregard of the value of time, ordinarily comes upon the scene several hours before the actual commencement of operations. They occupy one side of the stage, and tune up their seing and play away vigorously while the people gather. The zaht-thama and zaht-thamah, the male and female *artistes*, drop in casually along with the spectators. Each is ordinarily accompanied by a servant to carry their dresses and help them in robing. All of them, women as well as men, make their preparations in full view of everybody. Each lady has a toilette-box with all the

necessaries for making up. Many are the hints the village maidens receive in the way of touching up eyebrows, artfully swelling out the sadohn with false locks of hair, intertwining the raven tresses with red and white fragrant flowers, toning the complexion with thana'kah, and so on. The young men look on critically while the princess scans herself in the little hand-mirror and tranquilly completes the touching-up and other feminine mysteries so little dreamed of by ordinary European swains. No one has the slightest appearance of recognising the ludicrousness of the thing, or of deprecating the exposure of little female wiles and vanities. The zaht-thamah wears her acting skirt indeed when she arrives, but everything else—the tight-fitting lace jacket, the stiff brocaded wings, the jewellery, the pagoda-like crown—is put on by the side of the stage at the bamboo rack which supports the masks and necessary changes of dress. The audience either looks on with stolid earnestness, or takes no notice whatever.

Finally, having smoked all through the toilette, the princess and the maids of honour quietly seat themselves—squat would be more accurate, but does not sound nice—at the edge of the pwè-weing, and continue to smoke till everything is ready and their call comes. Then they simply stand up and are on the stage immediately. They do not cease smoking then, except during a long song. The men are equally calm. The king chews betel and salivates copiously between observations or speeches, but in so doing he can only be said to be the more realistic. Incidental ballets are introduced to relieve the monotony of the dialogue, and the maids of honour and the clowns perform wonderful feats of winding themselves about as if they had no bones, picking up coins with the mouth bent back to the ground, doubling themselves up so that the toes touch the forehead, and so on.

Sometimes there are great fights at these pwès. A young man has got surly because there is such a crowd that he can see nothing of what is going on, and runs up against another equally inclined to quarrel for the same reason. Or perhaps he is angry because some one has supplanted him in a flirtation with one of the girls who have established a temporary bazaar in the outskirts of the crowd. Or there may be a dispute as to the ownership of a mat. There are

a few loud words ; a woman's voice joins in. Next minute the two are smashing away at one another with their long hair streaming over their faces and down their shoulders. Friends join in, and almost before you can realise what has happened, the actors disappear, the women and children run off home, and the street is filled with an excited crowd of men swaying backwards and forwards, and fighting promiscuously. For this reason pwès are never allowed in Lower Burma without permission from the civil authority, and numbers of policemen are always at hand to nip any riot in the bud. With the same object performances are only allowed in large towns about the time of the full moon, when there is abundance of light, in case the street lamps should be put out. The worst row of the kind I ever saw, however, was started by two of the Burman policemen themselves. They quarrelled about the merits of two a-pyo-daws, talented *danseuses*, and the crowd, relishing the absurdity of the thing, backed up the quarrel with such energy that broken heads were plentiful and a ward in the infirmary was filled.

Foreigners very often make the mistake of taking the performances of children's companies to be actual zaht plays. Even Captain Forbes, usually so accurate, falls into this error in speaking of a representation of the Waythandaya zaht. This must simply have been a yehn, an adaptation of the great drama for performance by the little choral dancers. For people who do not understand Burmese well—among whom, of course, the late Captain Forbes was certainly not to be included—the mistake is very easy. They are far prettier to look at, and much preferable in every way to the actual text of the birth-story, mainly because they are not so dismally drawn out, and can ordinarily be got through in an evening.

The dramas are all founded on the tales which Shin Gautama told of five hundred and ten of his previous existences, or on events in the lives of kings and heroes in India. None of them are original. The story in every instance is taken from the Hindoo, the adapter in most cases not even taking the trouble to nationalise the names of places and characters. It is only in the extemporising of the clown that anything really characteristic comes out.

The Hindoo sense of humour is vastly inferior to the Burmese.[1]

Ten of the religious dramas stand out prominently from the others. These are called the Zaht-gyee Tsè-bwè, and are designed to show how the Lord Buddha in turn overcame all the deadly sins. They are named: (1) *Taymee*, (2) *Zanecka*, (3) *Thoowoon-na-shan*, (4) *Naymee*, (5) *Mahawthata*, (6) *Boo-yee-dat*, (7) *San-da Gohmma*, (8) *Nah-yidda*, (9) *Wee-dooya*, and (10) *Waythandaya*. Several of them are very interesting. The *Waythandaya* is probably best known on account of the affecting nature of the story and the beauty of the composition. It illustrates the boundless pity of a Budh. The prince—Gautama's last incarnation on earth previous to his appearance as Prince Siddartha or Theidat—gives away everything he possesses, even to his wife and children. The Naymee and Boo-yee-da zahts, or woottoos as they are called indifferently, are also very popular on account of the particulars they give of nga-yè, the great hell, and the country of the nagahs, fabulous creatures, like the kraken, that sleep deep down below, far beyond the ken of mortal man. The similarities between Norse mythology and Buddhist cosmogonies have often been noticed, and the legend of the kraken or nagah is not the least singular.

Of the other more secular plays, Oo Hpo Nyah is the most celebrated recent author. He was killed in the late king's reign by the Tabè Mintha, one of the most brutal of the royal princes, and for whose son's head King Theebaw twice paid a thousand rupees. The young man is, however, still alive, long after King Theebaw himself has gone. He is not amiable. His hectoring manner, on thirty rupees a month, in Rangoon, "shows the bricks below the gilding," according to the national proverb. His father's victim, Oo Hpo Nyah, was particularly celebrated for the sweetness and melody of the songs introduced in his pieces, these songs, of course, being practically original. No one before or since is equal to him in this respect. The *Weezaya Zaht*

[1] The term Zaht or, still more so, Woottoo (*i.e.* a real story) is properly applied only to the religious plays, the five hundred and ten Jatakas. The work of fiction not necessarily religious is called a Pya-zaht, an *acting* play. Thus you speak of the Ootayn-na Woottoo (given in part by Yule), but of the Zawta Gohmma Pya-zaht.

is probably his masterpiece, and forms one of the stock-in-trade of every company in the country. Moung Hpay, the son of a woon-gyee, or chief minister of state in Mandalay, is the best and most voluminous living writer. An ever favourite play is the *Yamah Zaht*, the fight of the "monkeys" and the men in Ceylon. It was performed by a palace troupe specially sent down to Rangoon by King Mindohn on the occasion of the proclamation of the Queen as Empress in India. Everything was of the best possible kind; the royal drum and cymbal harmonicons, the trumpets, the flutes, even the bamboo clappers, were of an excellence never before known in Rangoon. The players were famous wherever Burmese was spoken, and the play lasted five nights. The general opinion was that it called forth more admiration of King Mindohn than loyalty for the Empress.

All that has been said of the zaht pwès, those in which men and women act, applies with equal force to the yoht-thay, or marionette pwès. It is well known that the Burmese esteem these more highly than what Englishmen would call the legitimate drama. The action in the puppet-shows is much more complicated than on the plain mat stage, the dialogue is very much more refined, and there are none of the *lâches* perpetrated by individual zaht-thama striving for effect. Especially there is never, even with the provocation of a number of Englishmen present, the least semblance of coarseness. Further, supernatural beings, nats and beeloos, elephants, dragons, ships, thrones, and properties of all sorts can be introduced which are impracticable on the limited arena of the mat platform. The elocutionary powers of the performers behind the curtain, the verve and passion of the songs, the accuracy and melody of the recitative, to command success must be at least as good, if not better, than the best of what is met with in the pwè-weing. Added to this there is the manual skill implied in moving the strings attached to the heads, limbs, and joints of the puppets, which are often exceedingly cleverly manipulated. The national preference for the marionette play is therefore not entirely without justification.

The action takes place on a raised bamboo platform

some thirty feet long, the puppets performing on the stage in front of a curtain which screens the manipulators down the whole length of the erection. One end of the stage is devoted to scenes at court, and is adorned with a throne, golden umbrellas, and other royal insignia. The other extremity represents, with artfully-arranged twigs and tufts of grass, the jungle and forests to which, during some part of every play, the prince and princess are sure to have to fly. The puppets, which are frequently as much as two or three feet high, are always gorgeously and expensively dressed. The larger ones are all cut in wood, and the carver's skill oftens turns out very clever presentments of rugged-faced old men and exuberantly jovial loo-byets. Most of the zahts, which deal greatly with the supernatural and fabulous, are only represented as yoht-thay pwès. No amount of technical skill could represent in the public streets an a-thoorehn, a creature (destined incalculable ages hence to be a Budh) whose height is a few thousand miles, and who produces eclipses in his play by taking the sun or moon in his fingers or between his toes.

Curious as it may seem, the puppet players often acquire a far more really personal reputation than the legitimate actors. The zaht-thama mostly get a name for dancing as much as for anything else. The Yeendaw Mah-lay, indeed, is equally celebrated for her voice and her graceful movements, but the yoht-thay-thama become renowned for dramatic fervour, for tender passion, for dry wit, just as thoroughly and personally as if they actually appeared before the audience. Except the *prima donna* just alluded to there is no professional celebrated on the stage, who is not far better known as a first-class marionette player. These performers are all men and boys. None of the female parts are ever taken by women. Moung Thah Byaw is unequalled in "prince's" parts. He is recognised as Tha-bin-woon; every stage-manager, every zaht-oke in the country receives his word as law. No tenor with a *voce fenomenale*, no bird-voiced Patti, is more sought after nor received with greater honours. His name has become a proverb in the mouths of people who never heard him.

"Thah Byaw Hé," a Mergui man will say when he makes a marvellous haul of fish, or gets a super-excellent cheroot. A journey of his to Rangoon has produced a popular saw, corresponding to the English "killing two birds with one stone." Moung Thah Byaw said he was going to worship at the Shway Dagohn pagoda. He gave a performance or two, and made several (Burmese) fortunes. Hence the saying—

Payah lè poo yin
Lehp oo lè too yin.

You go and worship and dig turtles' eggs.

Turtles' eggs for prayer
Reward the pious player.

Moung Thah Byaw is not only a good singer, but himself writes very good songs, and is particularly clever at coining in phrases the wisdom of many with the wit of one. No other "prince" is worthy of being mentioned with him. Best known among the clowns is Shway Loht Gyee, who has the knack of making local jokes wherever he may be, and takes the fullest advantage of the scope which the language affords him in the way of punning. Just after the small railway from Rangoon to Prome was opened, Shway Loht Gyee was performing in a piece where the prince and his servant, the clown, wander away into the forest and fall into a state of great destitution. The prince bewails his sad fate in a dolorous tay-dat (a tune appropriate to such lamentations), and finishes by asking what they are to do. The loo-byet replied, "The English have just opened a railway here. You go and trespass on it, and I'll lay information against you and get the reward." The idea showed considerable acuteness in a man who had never seen a railway before.

Among the "princesses" many youths are noted for the sweetness of their voice. The two best are Moung Thah Zahn and, running him very close, Moung Moo, both of them, like Thah Byaw and the clown, Mandalay men. The accuracy with which they imitate the female voice is wonderful, the more so as every song abounds with trills and turns which would expose the least roughness. Neither in the recitative, the tremulous erotics, nor the doleful wailings of

the maiden for her absent lover, would the stranger ever suspect the performer's sex.

The plays are performed during the day only in a few and exceptional cases, such as the arrival of a great man, who cannot stay over the night, or when a local feast, limited in its time, occurs. The great and legitimate season is the night, and frequently a play, especially a puppet play, extends over six or seven successive nights. The majority of the audience stay the whole time, from seven or eight o'clock at night till sunrise. It is not, however, to be supposed that they hear it all through. Abundance of mats and rugs are brought, and not a few, after listening till midnight or thereabouts, calmly curl themselves up to sleep, and slumber away for two or three hours, heedless of the braying of the nès, and the crash of the cymbals only a few yards off. Then they wake up and fall in with the progress of the piece with as keen interest as if they had heard every word of it. Most of the young people, however, prime themselves with the anti-soporific le'hpet, "pickled tea," as the English call it, and bid defiance to drowsiness. This condiment is as regular a crown to a Burmese dinner as cheese is to an English one, and with the same idea, possibly erroneous in both cases, that it promotes digestion. The greater quantity of it is prepared by the Shans and Paloungs, hill tribes on the Chinese border, and is floated down the river on small bamboo rafts to keep it moist. The Burmese mix with it salt, garlic, and assafœtida, douse it in oil, and add a few grains of millet seed. Both Burmese and English names are misleading. The leaves forming the basis are not those of the tea tree, but of a shrub which Hooker calls the *Elæodendron orientale*, while Dr. Anderson asserts it is the *E. persicum*. However that may be, one of the grievances which Englishmen have when they attend a pwè is that they are always induced by their host to take pickled tea, and perceive in it nothing but the overpowering horrors of the assafœtida. Pwès and assafœtida are therefore associated with one another to the detriment of both.

The foreigner cannot detect one tune from another, or the recitative from any one of them. Consequently he declares there is only one tune, or no tune at all, according to the

capacity of generosity in him. The same thing has been said by an inappreciative Burman of the "vipers" of the Royal Scots Fusiliers. He admired the conscientiousness and pertinacity with which they defied the mosquitoes under the shade of the trees, and droned away on their pipes all through a tight-tunic'd and perspiring Rangoon afternoon garden party, as the observant Burman imagined, at one endless tune. The national music is not written down, and each actor has a variation of his own, but the smallest girl in the audience would detect a kayah-than from a doh-bat-than with as much readiness as any English boy would separate "Drops o' Brandy" from the "Old Hundred"! But there are some people who do not like the Italian opera, and even say so.

The following short outline of the *Zawtagohmma pyazaht* will give an idea of the style of the more popular drama, as distinguished from the purely religious birth-story. The writer is an old player himself. He lives at Pegu, and the *Zawtagohmma* is perhaps his most successful effort. The text has been published at one of the vernacular presses in Rangoon, and the sketch given is a translation of the Zaht-lan, the "path of the play," prefixed by the editor. "In the country of Pyin-yaw-wada, of which Yazohtta was the sovereign, the name of the Southern Queen was Thoo-naymma-daywee, and that of the Northern Queen Thoo-kaythee-daywee. The Queen of the Southern Palace was about to bear a child, and the king issued an order that her majesty of the North should attend on her. This was very irritating to the Northern Queen, and she resolved to ruin Thoo-naymma-daywee, and for that purpose conspired with Shin Gway Nee, the midwife. As soon as the child was born it was to be killed, and set afloat on the river in an earthen pot, and the *accoucheuse* was to say the Head Queen had been delivered of a still-born baby. A twin son and daughter were born, and Shin Gway Nee put each of them in a jar and launched them on the river, and went and told the king that they were still-born. Yazohtta, the king, was very angry, and punished his consort by setting her to dig the ground and carry water for the palace. The Queen of the North was promoted to be Head Queen, and her daughter,

Pyinsaroopa, was made tabin-deing (*i.e.* she was set apart as wife for the next king, and not allowed to marry).

"With regard to the bodies of the prince and princess, the prince was carried down the Yamoona river and the Thoowoona nagah swallowed the body, and the spirit of the prince entered into the ruby that hung in the necklace of the dragon. Not long after the nagah became nervous and uncomfortable in his mind, and proceeded to the monastery of the recluse Bayda-sehnda, in the Theereewoonna forest. There he went to keep the ten holy precepts. As soon as the ya-theht saw the necklace with the ruby in it, he knew by his baydin that the spirit of a young prince was enclosed there. He therefore represented to the dragon that it was unseemly to wear precious things when he was observing the injunctions of the law. The nagah therefore gave him the necklace in alms, and having kept the ten precepts the prescribed number of days, returned to his own place. When the prince was born anew from the ruby, the ya-theht gave him the name of Zawtagohmma and explained to him all that had happened in the prince's last existence.

"The princess's body was carried away into the Southern Ocean, and there the fish kegga-theetha, whose head is shaped like a sceptre, ate her up. The spirit of the princess entered a pearl in the fish's head and dwelt there. A violent hurricane came on, and the fish was carried up into the sky and fell down inside the enclosure of the recluse Bayda-thehnda. When the ya-theht cast eyes on the pearl, he knew that a princess was in it, and he gave this pearl, called the myissa, to the Zawtagohmma prince. From the precious stone was born in seven days the princess, and she got the name of Palè-thwè. The ya-theht knew from his mystic books, that in the former existence they had been brother and sister, and told them all about it.

"When they grew up he told them they were to go back to the old king and queen's capital in the Pyin-yaw-wada country, and on their way they were to make offerings and give the pearl to the Gyoh nat. But the prince forgot all about the Mehttoo Gyoh, and the spirit therefore became very angry with him. While they were travelling on, the nat separated them by means of magnets which attracted the

iron in their bones, and drew them away to the devils on either side, to right and to left, who held the magnets.

"Meanwhile, in the Pyin-yaw-wada country, Zawtagohmma's father and mother, and his stepmother, the former Northern Queen, had all of them gone to the country of nat-dewahs (*i.e.* died), and there was no king to rule over the land. The Pyinsaroopa princess therefore (who had been kept single to marry the new king), according to ancient custom, sent out the poht-thwin yattah (a chariot which has no driver, and stops where the horses will), and it hurried away from the palace and came and stopped beside the sleeping Zawtagohmma. When he woke he entered the chariot, and the horses returned straight to the capital. The prince then ascended the throne and married Pyinsaroopa.

"In the meantime, the princess who was born from the pearl came to the house of a pohnna and his wife, and was delivered of a child there. One day she covered the baby with an emerald green neckerchief, and laying it down on the bank of a lake, went into the water to bathe. But a bird, called kehmma-yekka, swooped down from the skies and carried off the green scarf, baby and all. Then it flew to the palace of Zawtagohmma and circled round in the air above it. The prince shot at it with a bow, and it fell down and died, and vomited up the green scarf, and the baby, still alive. As soon as Zawtagohmma saw the infant and the neckerchief, he knew that they were Palè-thwè's, and clasping the child in his arms, he set out to find the princess, and wandered far and wide.

"Palè-thwè herself, as soon as she had obtained permission from the pohnna, set off in search of the prince and her child. The Brahmin priest, with the aid of his mantras, made her assume the appearance of a man, and despatched her to seek Zawtagohmma in the disguise of a harp-player. He also instructed her that she would meet the prince on the way, but she was not to reveal herself to him: she was to explain how it was that the two had been separated by the Mehttoo Gyoh nat, and say that she had met Palè-thwè, and that the princess had gone to Pyin-yaw-wada; Zawtagohmma himself was to take the counsel of the Baydin, wise men, and return to his own country, where he must offer sacrifices to the ten

gyoh nats, whereupon he would meet the Princess Palè-thwè, the wife he so tenderly loved. All these instructions the pohnna gave to the princess, and then let her go. All happened as he had foretold. She met the prince and he followed her advice. They returned to the Pyin-yaw-wada country, and all was happy."

The above is the merest outline of the story. The piece is very long, and there is abundance of incident. The prince's servant, and usually also the two holy men, do the comic part of the business, but this is always so purely personal a matter that the printed text can give no real notion of what actually is said. It serves merely to point out the lines which the loo-byet must follow in his impersonation. The stage books, written on palm-leaf, contain but very few detailed speeches, and merely indicate the story, and throw out hints to the actors. The following is one of the songs sung by the prince in his wanderings through the forest in quest of Palè-thwè. It is written to the tune of the "Chase in the Taw-maw-yohn Forest," that in which the king goes to hunt in the epic of the Ramayana. The "woot" or "woot-daw" referred to is the penalty of suffering the same punishment, or death, which has in a former existence been wrongfully or needlessly inflicted on others. Thus the great minister, Weedooya, spoken of, who was an avatar of the Lord Buddha, had in a previous life dragged a frog by the leg so that it died. Hence he is dragged at the tail of the fierce Nat's horse until he dies himself. The prince fears that some such evil destiny is working itself out on him. The jingle of the rhythm is intended. The whole play is of the "raging rocks and shivering shocks" pattern.

FATE

The wind breathes chill
  Across the rill
That cuts the forest track;
  The haze to mist
  Whitens, I wist,
And I am lost, alack.

  The branches spread
  Dull-green and red
Flat o'er the sullen stream;

Comes through the gloom
The gibbon's boom,
And weird the parrot's scream.

Ah, sad the scene;
But yet, I ween,
A sadder wight am I;
The thoo-young seed [1]
Gives lovers rede,
But sears my tortured eye.

Ah, cruel spite,
Ah, cursed night,
That tore my Queen away;
More comfort here,
In jungle drear,
Than in the golden day.

The fog's death-cloud
Hangs like a shroud
Upon the shagg'd hillside;
The tall trees mope,
The wild beasts grope,
Nor know what may betide.

Yet the great sun
Needs cast but one
Fierce eye upon the gloom;
The mists all rise,
Mix with the skies,
And rainbows deck his loom.

Ah, wretched wight,
Such omen bright
Gleams not upon my fate;
Nor faint, nor bright,
Hope's golden light
Lends me no heart to wait.

The story old
Of Nat so bold
Creeps o'er my harassed thought;
Haply this hill
He treadeth still,
And here that horror wrought.

[1] The fruit of the thoo-young bin, a kind of half shrub, half tree, has a curious resemblance to the figure of a woman, and *soupirants* are wont to detect fancied likenesses to the object of their affections, and deduce favourable omens from the discovery.

In warlike guise,
With wings on thighs,
He scales where eagles flag;
His magic steed
Hath such great speed
The lightnings seem to lag.

Ah, fateful law,
Ruthless Woot-daw,
Weedooya, art thou feared?
From life long past,
Thy sin at last
Eftsoons must dree its weird.

Nor soon, nor late
With calm, cold gait
The Woot relentless tracks;
Nor prayer, nor fees
Will bring release,
'Tis blood for blood it lacks.

Thy limbs fast tied
The Nat doth ride
O'er gorge and cliff and plain;
At his horse heels
Dragged, no faint steals
O'er thee to spare one pain.

Though blood forth gushed
And brain was crushed,
Thy heart was panting still;
Lingered thy breath,
Nor came glad death
Till ye twain reached this hill.

The fiend sprang down,
And from its crown
He hurled thee many a rod,
With eldritch glee
He hurled e'en thee
The great embryo god.

So the old Woot
With stealthy foot
Nor pity e'er evinces:
So must some crime
From ancient time
Have robbed me of my princess.

Methinks 'twas here,
This place so drear,
That great Weedooya died ;
Here or elsewhere,
With praise and prayer
I seek him for my guide.

Ah, still the Woot
Its baleful fruit
Doth bring before mine eyes.
See, bright and clear,
The Saddan mere
And round the mountains rise.

Like jangled chime,
Or tangled rhyme,
The piteous tale is told ;
The Saddan Min [1]
By death solves sin
Committed once of old.

Thrice wretched she,
By destiny
Marked out the blow to guide ;
She, then as Queen
Thoobadda seen
Had erewhile been his bride.

But beauty's curse
Hath made her nurse
Greed most akin to hate ;
The milk-white tusk
She sought to busk
With glories six her state.

Then her behest
She hath addressed
To Thaw-nohttoh, the hind ;

[1] The Saddan Min is the Celestial White Elephant, an avatar of the Buddha Gautama. Hence it is that white elephants are so revered and regarded as the symbol of universal sovereignty. Thoobadda had been the Saddan's queen in a previous existence. She repents, dies of sorrow, when she hears of the Lord White Elephant's end, and afterwards, in consequence, becomes a Yahanda in the time of the revealing of the Buddha. Mè-badda is the actual consort of the Saddan. She became, in after existence, Yathawdaya, the wife of Prince Theidat, before he left the palace and devoted himself to acquiring the Supreme Wisdom. Thaw-nohttoh, the hunter, became the wicked Dewadat, cousin and brother-in-law of the Lord Buddha, and now languishes in Awidzee, suffering punishment for his attempt on the life of Shin Gautama.

Fell hunter that,
As Dewadat
Much evil hath designed.

Then he with guile
His purpose vile
With yellow robe conceals ;
The Monkish garb
Hides the sharp barb,
Nor aught of sin reveals.

And when he nears
The silver mere's
Fair jewel-studded edge ;
Then like a snake,
Through baleful brake.
He parts the golden sedge.

His arrows' tip
With poison drip,
He rears his cobra head ;
The bowstring twanged,
The dart deep-fanged
Its course too well had sped.

Thy heart is cleft,
Thy life is reft,
Now, reel'st thou, milk-white King ;
The woodland hushed,
And darkness brushed
O'er earth its sooty wing.

The silent moon
Doth fright the noon,
And Death e'en breath restrains ;
Save one wild scream
Might check the stream
Of blood in murder's veins.

Mè-badda, Queen,
The deed had seen,
She caught him e'er he fell ;
Would staunch the flood
Of red heart's blood
That fiercely forth doth well.

Ah me, 'tis vain,
Wild with heart-pain
Forth flies the frenzied wife
To seek for foes,
Or mayhap those
Might save the Saddan's life.

Ye who doubt truth,
The boundless ruth
Of the all-pitying Budh ;
Now list ye well
What then befell,
And quit your scoffing mood.

Straight to the cave,
Where crouched the knave,
He walks with gentle mien ;
Himself bestows
The tusks' white snows
For Thoobadda, the Queen.

Ah, cruel Woot,
Why strayed my foot
Unto this eerie spot ?
See low I bow
To earth my brow ;
Be mine less awesome lot.

Here erewhile trod
The embryo god,
Now all is dull and blear ;
O'er land and sea
I seek for thee,
My Princess, even here.

By lonesome lake,
Through forest brake,
I'll track each rumour's breath ;
Where roams the bear,
By fierce beast's lair,
I'll seek thee e'en past death.

But, 'gainst the Woot's
Fierce power what boots
To strive with eager zeal ?
. . . . . .
Peace, doubting heart,
No fate can part
True lovers fond and leal.

As an illustration of a purely religious play may be given the *Naymee Zaht*, one of the Ten Great Birth Stories. It is occasionally represented as a yoht-thay, or marionette play, but it is rather expensive to put it on the stage well. It was "preached" in the monastery of Meggadawoon, during the stay of Shin Gautama in Mètheela, of which country he

remembered to have been king in a previous existence. The following is the story in brief:—

In old times the King Minga-deva ruled over the country, and for many years was entirely given up to pleasure and worldly passions, till one day his barber showed him a grey hair—"a flag of the king of death," as it is commonly called in Burmese—which he had found on the royal head. The king was struck with this *memento mori*, and immediately saw yawning before his eyes the abyss of mortality. Alarmed at the vision, he gave up the gay raiment and idle pleasures of earthly glory, and wandered into the desert to end his life as a hermit. His self-denying piety gained for him on his death elevation to the seats of the Byammahs, and all the 82,000 princes who succeeded him on the throne of Mètheela followed the example of their ancestor, and retired into hermits' cells when they felt their end approaching. Minga-deva, from his blissful superior seat, followed with earnest solicitude the fortunes of his dynasty, and when at length he saw that it was drawing near its close, he returned once more to earth. He was conceived in the womb of the then Queen of Mètheela, and was born of her, and received the name of Prince Naymee. From his earliest years, as the pohnnas discerned from his horoscope, his mind was firmly and unwaveringly directed to the prescriptions of religion and to pious observances. Once when he felt a doubt in his mind as to whether the outward giving of alms or the inward self-contemplation was the more meritorious, the Tha-gyah King himself came down and instructed him that abundant charity would indeed secure him a new birth in the heavens of Nat-dewahs, but that only the cultivation of the mind could ensure a rise to the blessed regions of the Byammahs. The Dewah King was so attracted by the religious spirit and piety of the young prince that on his return he spoke of it with admiring delight to his subject Nats. Their curiosity was excited by the account of such distinguished qualities in a man, and they begged the Tha-gyah Min to procure for them the acquaintance of so holy a personage. Accordingly the king gave orders to a young Dewah named Matalee to descend to the earth, and invite the young prince to a visit to the nat-heavens.

It was the day of the full moon, and all the inhabitants of Mètheela were assembled in the streets and on the pagoda platforms to observe the ceremonies of the holy day, when a great wonder happened. While the full moon shone high and clear in the heavens, there appeared through the clouds a glowing light in the east, so that all the people cried aloud in astonishment that two moons had arisen in the sky at the same time. But as the light gradually neared and neared, it became evident that it was a nat-chariot with the young Dewah inside. Matalee advanced to the prince and invited him to enter the car, and proceed to the realms of the blessed. Naymee stepped in without fear, and when he was told by the charioteer that there were two ways open to him, of which one led through the horrors of Nga-yè, and the other through the Elysian fields, he at once desired to visit both. First they went down to the eight vast burning chambers, and saw the pains of the damned in the fiery gloom of hell, and then they ascended and viewed the pure delights of bright paradise. After Naymee had met in audience the highest king of Nats, he returned to earth to give to his subjects a true account of what fate would befall them after death, according as they followed the path of virtue or of vice.

After many peaceful and honoured years, when Naymee at last saw his hair begin to grow grey, he, like his predecessors, entered the state of Yahanda and abdicated the royal power. The same venerable custom was followed by his son Thala-razana, the last of the roll of kings, who, when old age began to snow upon them, devoted themselves to the holy order in the town of Yathay-myo (Kappilavastu).

It is evident that such a play as this, if it offers plenty of incident, is all the more difficult to put on the stage, and can hardly be satisfactorily produced at all on the ordinary stage. No zaht furnishes more subjects to the Burman artist than that of Naymee, and pagoda corridors all over the country are decorated with the scenes in hell, which are much more easily pictured to the mind and the eye than the pure joys of heaven.

# CHAPTER XXX

## DANCING

DANCING, though an accomplishment in which every Burmese man or woman is more or less proficient, is, as elsewhere in the East, never carried on simply for personal amusement. That custom, together with elaboration of the two sexes dancing in couples, is entirely a western invention. If a great man wants dancing he hires people to do it for him. If indeed he becomes greatly excited at a boat-race, a buffalo fight, or a religious procession on its way through the town to the pagoda, he may tuck up his pasoh tightly round his thighs and caper away till his bare legs tire, but he does so ordinarily with a ludicrously solemn aspect, as if the performance were a part of his official duties, and to be got through with as much stately dignity as the dispensing of justice from the magisterial bench. It is a concession to the excitability of his nature, and he would be very much offended if next day, when he had calmed down to his ordinary composed demeanour, an Englishman were to compliment him on the agility he displayed, or the complexity of his evolutions on the previous day.

With the young people it is different, but only to a certain extent. Most of them, if they have any aptitude that way, practise dancing for the sake of the applause and admiration it may get for them when they perform in a village procession, at the initiation of a young friend into a monastery, or at one of the great religious feasts, such as Tawadehn-tha, or even at a funeral. But as a general rule no lessons are taken other than watching noted performers. The ambitious usually confine themselves to practise in out-

of-the-way places by themselves, trusting to natural ability and good ear to help them in the harmonious movement of head, limbs, and body, to the sound of the music. The women who dance as professionals in the plays have to go through a very rigorous course, not that there are any complicated steps to be learnt, but that they may acquire the pliancy of body necessary for the indiarubber contortions into which they have to writhe their bodies.

There are therefore no distinctions of dances, according to regular varieties of movements. These are pretty well regulated both by professionals and amateurs according to individual fancy. If such a thing as an "encore" existed in Burma, it would probably puzzle the dancer to repeat the step exactly as it has been gone through before. This of course refers to individual dancing, and does not by any means apply to the yehn pwès, where a carefully-trained troupe goes through pre-arranged movements with well-drilled precision. There may be said to be really only two kinds of dancing: individual, or it might almost be called irresponsible dancing, such as is seen in the plays and at various religious or social ceremonies; and the yehn pwès, the figure, or "country" dances, where much practice and working together is imperatively necessary. A zaht-oke, or theatre manager, will tell you that there are four or perhaps five kinds; the dancing of the zaht pwè, the regular drama; that of the yahma zaht (the Ramayana), which is of a much wilder and more energetic character; the dancing of the a-nyehn-thama, the trained companies of ballet-dancers, who perform in the palace before the king and princes to the sound of the pattala, the harp, or the flute. These are simply glorified yehns, and the *danseuses* are often most gorgeously dressed with gilded pyramidal crowns, and wings on their legs. Fourthly, there is the bohn-shay pwè, a performance of much the same kind, except that it is gone through to the music of the instrument of that name, a long kettle-drum-like thing, much the same as the tom-tom of India. This latter variety is considered old-fashioned, and is not often seen now, notwithstanding that it is called Byaw, after the great Tha-bin-woon, who is particularly fond of it. The fifth style of dancing, according to the player's

idea, is the performance of the ordinary domestic youth on festive occasions, when he prances about like an extremely self-conscious turkey-cock in the style that suits his capabilities best.

There are a great variety of names for special dances, but in all there is the same waving of hands and weaving of paces. The hands, fingers, elbows, and shoulders are twisted about as if they were circular-jointed; the legs are doubled up and extended in the same fantastic and tentacular fashion, while the body seems to wind and bend in any direction with equal facility. I am not a *connoisseur* in dancing myself, and will only add that Europeans as a rule find no attractions in the dancing except the marvellous sensitiveness to time, and the extreme tension in which every muscle of the body is constantly kept.

Little though the dancing of the men resembles European saltation, that of the girls is still farther from active motion and definitive figures. This is no doubt in great part due to the Burmese female dress. The tamehn is simply a square cloth folded round the body and tucked in so that the opening is down the front. This necessitates some adroitness even in walking, and renders all active motions incompatible with modesty. When they dance the skirt is sewn or pinned down the front, so that the girl is, as it were, in a narrow bag, reaching down to her feet and trailing about on the ground in an eighteen-inch or two-foot train. Even thus hampered their dances are much more animated than those of the Indian nautch girls, but still do not go greatly beyond posturing. Nevertheless, the natural and graceful attitudes into which they throw the body, and the cleverness with which they manœuvre their hands and arms, so different from European awkwardness with these members, is not without a charm. It is quite a common thing to see a girl bend over backwards till her lips touch the mat upon which she stands, and pick up from the ground rupees thrown there by the spectators. In Mandalay I have seen a performer double up all her members, head and all, into a space represented by the length of her trunk, and compact enough to be put into an ordinary-sized portmanteau.

The zaht-thamah, the professional actresses, usually dance

to their own singing and often improvise with wonderful cleverness, when performing before a celebrity, or any one whom it is especially desired to honour. Many of them acquire a reputation that extends all over the country, and are often sought for in vain by the wealthiest play-goers. Chief among them was the Yeendaw Mah-lay, the "Mandalay Diva," who was known to every English official or man of importance who visited Mandalay during the twenty years before the annexation. Unlike most Eastern women, she kept remarkably well, and though her voice failed latterly, she made up as well as she did nearly twenty years before, when she sang in Amarapoora, the City of the Immortals. There were few Englishmen who saw her perform before Lord Mayo in Rangoon—she was sent down specially from Mandalay by the late king for that purpose—who could have believed that she was then close on forty. She has now finally retired.

An accomplishment greatly affected by the coryphées is the extraordinary faculty of moving local muscles, the remainder of the body being perfectly quiet. Many of the men, especially the clowns of the piece, can do the same thing, but it is usually brought in by them only as a mockery of the lady. She will extend the arms alternately and cause the muscles to rise and fall and twitch so vigorously that it may be seen yards off. Similarly the bosom heaves as if violently agitated by passion or exertion, while the face remains perfectly impassive.

These displays are all, however, comparatively uninteresting to foreigners. The posturing and waving of hands, however graceful and supple, become tiresome, and the more so the oftener they are seen. But it is different with the yehn pwè, the choral dances, which are very often executed by amateurs, and imply considerable skill and long practice under competent instructors. The *coup d'œil* is very attractive, and the effect of the different groupings quite as good as anything to be seen in the incidental ballet of the European stage, while the brilliance of the dresses and the ebbing and flowing chorus of the dancers add to the picturesqueness of the whole. The yehn flourishes most in small villages, where the most promising of the youth of both sexes are taken in

charge by a skilled sayah, who trains them assiduously together until they have attained perfection. Even in these dances the sexes do not mingle. There are mehmma yehn and youkya yehn, the former usually eschewing complex movements, and sitting in rows on the ground, richly decked with bracelets, and dahleezan necklaces falling over their silken vests or tight-fitting lace bodices. The dancing consists of the usual pirouetting, or perhaps it ought to be called winding, on both feet, with much serpentine movements of the arms and the head. The loosening of the elbow-joint is greatly practised by Burmese girls with a view to these performances, and also under the impression that it is elegant in itself. From early years the arm is so manipulated that the forearm can be bent back so as to form a curve outwards, and this accomplishment is steadily exhibited on all occasions in public by a belle who has acquired it. Very often the mehmma yehn is performed by a body of girls, who succeed one another in successive groups. All are seated at first. The chorus begins in a low recitative gradually swelling until at last the first group rise and go through a stately performance. They are succeeded by the next row, who are more lively in their movements, and so on to the last, who are usually young girls, and are much more rapid and varied in their figures than their elder predecessors. Finally, all join in some complicated evolutions, and finish up seated in some pre-arranged figure. But as a rule the mehmma yehns, though pretty enough as a mere spectacle, have not sufficient action to redeem them from the accusation of tiresome sameness brought against individual dancing.

In the men's dances it is different. At the commencement all are seated, four or five in the front row, and forming a column of perhaps ten or more rows. The conductor gives the sign and all bow down with closed hands raised to the forehead in salutation to the great man in whose honour the dance is given. Then they begin singing in chorus in the usual way. The song treats in a rambling way of the past history of the village, its ancient princes and heroes; its victories in boat-races, boxing matches, or mains of cocks. Interpolated are catch phrases for the guidance of the dancers. At a certain word all spring to their feet; they

sway to the right, to the left ; white handkerchiefs are drawn from the belt and waved to the measure of the refrain, peeled white wands replace them ; they pirouette simultaneously, they troop round in procession in movements resembling figures in the Lancers or the Haymakers, the time varying with the measure of the song, dying away in plaintive sounds almost to quiescence, and then suddenly rising to excited movement of every limb as the words tell of a let-pwè, in which some local hero of the "fancy" did glorious deeds, or a fight long years ago when the village spearmen carried the day. Then the measure changes again, the alterations in time being always heralded by some such refrain as toh yehn daw tha, lay moung yoh wa, a kind of warning hung out after the manner of the first word of a military command. Occasionally a yehn troupe which has acquired particular skill and renown travels about the country on special invitation. Rangoon is often supplied with its "country dances" in this way, the townspeople not having the time, or being too numerous to form a good company for themselves. But they very rarely become regular professionals in the same way as the play actors do ; they never perform ostensibly to gain a living, and the dances always occur on some fête day, whether in their own place or in the village to which they have been invited. Their instructor always receives a sum of money to recompense him for his trouble and to pay for the expenses of his troupe. Yehn pwès are performed ordinarily in private houses or on a public platform, when it is a religious or special festival. A yehn is a favourite way of greeting a great man, or an English official on his arrival in a village. It is not so expensive as a zaht pwè, is more quickly arranged, allows the sons and daughters of the chief people to distinguish themselves, and lasts just as long as the person it is intended to honour pleases.

# CHAPTER XXXI

## MUSIC AND SONGS

THERE are no teachers of music or singing in Burma, and there are no written scores. A musician commences his career by diligently listening to the performance of a good band. By and by he enters the village orchestra as a clapper player, and so learns the time and the peculiarities of various tunes, just as actors rise from the posturing and choruses of children's and country yehn pwè to the full dignity of dramatic performers. As a natural consequence there are occasionally variations, and indeed every puloay, or flute-player, has his own particular mannerisms, but these are never so great as to materially alter the character of the air, and such tunes as the tay-dat, a-poo-deik, lohn-gyin, and so forth, which occur in every zaht, are as familiar to everybody as "God save the Queen and "Auld Lang Syne" are to an Englishman. Nevertheless it is very difficult for a foreigner to catch the air, and I have not been able to get an English score of any of the really old national tunes. The melody given later on was taken down from the playing of a well-known pwè leader in Maulmein, and has been harmonised for the town brass band by Mr. W. G. St. Clair of that place, to whom I am indebted for the score. So true is it to the air that many wealthy Burmans have the band to play at domestic festivals, funerals, and the like, and are satisfied to have the one tune played over and over again a score of times. But the kayah-than is of modern origin, and, as Burmans always say, in the English style, though Englishmen will persist in saying that there is nothing English about it. In the acknowledged national airs it is very difficult to get a definite rhythm, the

music being almost invariably a mere succession of recitative, more or less Wagnerian in its style.

The instruments of a full Burmese band always include the following, whether the occasion is the orchestra for a play, the music for a dance, for a wedding, an ear-boring ceremony, or a funeral. A seing-weing, an elaborately carved, circular, wooden frame, painted in parts, standing between two and three feet high, and five feet or more in diameter. Round the inside of this are hung drums of graduated sizes, which are struck with the hands of the performer, who sits in the middle. The alternate dry and saturated state of the atmosphere renders constant tuning necessary, and this is effected by tightening the drum heads, and also by smearing on with the fingers a paste made of burnt rice husk. The music produced is rather thin in itself, but by no means unpleasing. Similar to it in construction, but not standing so high, is the kyee-weing, the only difference being that graduated gongs take the place of the drums. The gongs are of course beaten with a knobbed stick, and not with the hand. These ponderous instruments can only be carried about in a cart, and their owner keeps perpetual guard over them, sitting in the centre, cheroot in mouth, for they cost a very considerable sum of money. Fair specimens of both the drum and the gong-harmonicon may be seen in the South Kensington Museum. In addition to these, there are in every band two or three hnè, trumpets or clarionets, with a broad bell-shaped mouth, which is movable and ordinarily but loosely attached. The noise of these is always very prominent, and is not relished by people who do not care for the bagpipes. There is also a similar number of puloay, or pyuay, a rude kind of flute. The best puloay-player is always the leader of the band. Then there are ya-gwin, big cymbals and than-lwin, little cymbals, and the patma, a long drum like the tom-tom of India and beaten with the hand in the same way. Finally there are the wah le' khoht, each formed of a length of bamboo, extending to five feet occasionally, and split down the centre. These castanets are always in the hands of the most recently joined, and therefore most zealous, members of the band, and are clapped together with an energy which usually makes them

unduly prominent. The above instruments serve to constitute a full band.

Besides these, however, there are several others, used by themselves, and learners—even those who are members of an orchestral band—usually avail themselves of the aid of a teacher to acquire accuracy and delicacy of touch, especially in the case of the harp. The soung consists of thirteen silken strings stretched on a boat-shaped wooden case, with a long, curved handle. The Burman boat, low at the bows, rises to a very considerable height at the stern, and is so like a harp frame that there is a stock story of a country peasant, for the first time in Mandalay, believing that the gilded royal boats in the moat were gigantic harps being seasoned for use in the palace. The sounding-board is formed of thick buffalo-hide, and the instrument is tuned by pushing the strings up or down the curved handle, and so tightening or loosening them. Only the young men play, and the accomplishment is not very common. The handle rests on the left arm and the right hand touches the strings, while the singer plays his own accompaniment. A similar instrument is the mee-gyoung, "the crocodile," a sort of guitar with three strings, stretched over a hollow sounding-board, shaped like that uninviting saurian. It is somewhat too primitive, however, to be popular, except with sentimental people. Finally there is the pattala, or bamboo harmonicon, as some call it. This instrument has always evoked approval from even the most fastidious of foreigners, as a singular instance of sweetness of sound produced from most unpromising materials. It consists of a carved and painted box, long and narrow and with high rising ends. From each of the corners of these sides are suspended strings, which hang down in a parabolic curve over the low centre of the box, and to these strings are attached flat strips of bamboo, placed at close intervals. Their tone is regulated by the more or less complete thinning out of the centre of the under side, and little sticks are used to strike them with. The notes produced are surprisingly clear and melodious.

Fiddles may often be heard played with greater or less skill, especially on the pagoda steps by blind and deformed

beggars, but the instrument is not national, and is never, or but rarely, found where Europeans have not penetrated. The same may be said of the young Burmans who play in Rangoon on the concertina and the English fife and piccolo. It is flattering to national pride to notice with what accuracy and rapidity they pick up English airs.

But except at funerals and other solemn occasions instrumental music is looked upon not so much as a means of enjoyment in itself as an accompaniment to the human voice, and mere orchestral concerts would never draw the crowds which a single good singer can always command. The recitative character of the music is always more evident in the singing than in the instruments, and each "prince" or "princess" has individual peculiarities in the way of trills and staccatos introduced into the legitimate air. As the young musician learns by hanging about the band, so a vocalist follows an acknowledged great singer about and imitates his style, or at any rate learns the tunes and the words. The latter are, however, very immaterial, for the language itself is so melodious that it is easy to express the ideas in rhythm as you go on. Moung Thah Byaw, the great singer of his day, always made his songs as he sung them, and this was so well known that whenever he appeared, whether in a regular play or only to sing a few airs, there were always thirty or forty reporters sitting round to take down his words in their parabeik. This peculiarity of the Tha-bin-woon occasionally got him into trouble. A somewhat incomprehensible piece of palace etiquette rendered it treasonable to sing a than-zan, a new song, before the king. Moung Thah Byaw several times, whether through too great laziness to learn the words, or from the force of habit, transgressed this rule, and was several times ordered out to execution. But he sang to the htoung hmoo and the pah gwet, and these grim customers, unable to resist the melody of this latter-day Orpheus, hid him away and exhibited some less talented person's body in evidence of having carried out their orders. Then when the next palace concert came on, the king—his late majesty—would grow tired of the ordinary vocalists and regret that the great improvisatore was gone. Whereupon Moung Thah Byaw

would promptly come forth and sing his sweetest. He was killed in this way several times, and is now not above sixty years of age—a little older than the *prima donna*, Yeendaw Mah-lay.

The honours he received were quite on a par with European admiration of musical talent. He had a patent to carry a golden umbrella, and, as Tha-bin-woon, had magisterial powers to punish those who offended him or refused to obey his edicts. Two lictors went before him to clear the way, a white cloth being tied round their fasces as a distinctive mark. When he performed in a play a low yaza mat, or royal fence, extended across the front of the stage, and at the ends were planted his golden htee and a banana-tree. The latter distinction was also granted to Moung Thah Zahn and Moung Moo, singers only inferior to the Tha-bin-woon himself.

If the tunes are not easily reduced to regular rules, the difficulty with the metres is not less. There exist, indeed, written laws ordaining the number of feet to the verse, but they are as lightly regarded as is consistent with their recognition at all. Much more precision is indeed expected in the old tunes than in those of modern date, but even with them song-writers of the present time allow themselves considerable freedom. The original linga are all very short. Thus the pyoh has but four syllables; ka-bya, four; yatoo, six and four; lootah, four; ya-gan, six and four; è-gyin, four, five, and six; hmaw-lohn, four and six; peik-zohn, four; lay-gyoh, four; sah-gyin, four, five, and six, and so forth. In the than-zan, or new tunes, however, the compass of the lines often approaches the portentous length of some of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. Such modern tunes are the kayah-than (so-called English), doh-bat-than, na-bay-than, nan-thehn yohdaya (Siamese), and pyee-gyee-than (Chinese). Such compositions as the lohn-gyin and ngoh-gyin cannot be designated otherwise than as musical prose, with occasional fits of metre, prompted by their dolorous character. They are usually the wails of despondent lovers and the laments of *divorcées*, unhappily all too common (in plays and song-books). Such, too, are the soung-ba-sah, the ardent epistles of separated sweethearts.

The question of rhyme is even more puzzling. Some compositions not intended to be sung, such as notably the sè-hnit ya-thee bwè, songs about the twelve months of the year, giving an account of their characteristics, the pwès that take place in them, and so on, are written with regular final rhymes, while the other laws of prosody, shi'-lohn ta-beik, koh-lohn ta-beik, and so forth, are fairly strictly observed. But in the songs of the plays and such-like productions, rhyme runs absolute riot, so that it is quite common for every word in a line to rhyme with the corresponding word in the second verse of the couplet.

Thus in the kayah than, translated below, there are abundance of lines like the following :—

Thoo-zah loh loh
Moo-yah poh poh.

Or—

Ma yoh lay hnan kyouk
A-poh lay tan louk.

Or in the Taydat—

Ta koh dè pa
Ma soh bè hma
A ngo thè hla.

Such rhymes occur in an abundance that makes them the most prominent characteristic of the verse, but it is impossible to reproduce them except in another monosyllabic language. English, of all others, offers the greatest difficulties to the translator.

I have done my best to reproduce the following Kayah-than, "The Sound of the Trumpet," as nearly as possible in the varying metre of the original. Those who are best able to judge of the success of the attempt will be the most lenient in their criticism. I may mention that the tune was originally composed to the words of a song in honour of the accession of King Theebaw, but words on all manner of subjects have been written to it since.

## RANGOON MAIDENS

O, the girls of Rangoon town,
They are fairies who've come down
From seats of nats, beyond the skies, sure here their likes are none.

And the fragrance on their cheek,
Gad, it makes a man feel weak,
And their hair so black and glossy with jet wavelets in the sun.
Ye maidens fair,
With graces rare,
Your faces and your ways they are a pair;
Nat-maidens are renowned,
But to say this I am bound—
If you were mixed
We should be fixed,
For who could tell the fairy from the fair?
You're so slender
And so tender,
You are like Waythandaya's queen,
And when Baranee is seen,
Who goddess is of flowers on the green,
Men say,
'Ameh!
Such a likeness, I am sure, ne'er was seen.'
Ah, when we meet by chance,
My heart's all in a dance,
You're so dangerously, murderously fair.
The diamond ear-ring's light
Like a meteor glows at night,
With the lightning of the hair-pin in the midnight gloom of hair.

The Southern Queen,
The right-hand Queen,
She who sits supreme, alone
By the monarch on the throne,
She the greatest of the Four;
List, sweet maids whom I adore,
Dark-skinned or fair,
Slim, *débonnaire*,
She has robes, a kingdom's joy,
That two hundred looms employ;
But the silken flowers you wear,
You may dare with her compare,
Rangoon maids.
With gay kerchief o'er the bosom,
With sweet swaying of the shoulder,
Without art
Ye inflict on one or two some
Wounds that love will hardly solder
In the heart.
O that curve in the round arm!
It has wrought men grievous harm.
Like the sylphs when they're at play,
Like the maids of Mandalay,

Without display
In everyday
Quiet dresses they
Are busked and gay
As the daughters of the palace, as the maidens of the skies
In their natural, their usual array.

O! could I but sing what I think,
My heart would no more on the brink
Of despairing love struggle and sink,
Ye maidens to heavens the link;
Each passer-by
Who casts his eye
Upon the buxom Hanthawaddy girls,
Though he be sage,
His feelings wage
Fierce war within his brain-pan till it whirls.

Dewah daughters, fair, fair,
Rosebud fairies, ware, ware,
Born men's hearts to snare, snare,
Can I paint your ways,
Better sound your praise,
In verse
That's terse
Than thus: You're fair as any maid in Mandalay.

Baranee is a daughter of nats, corresponding very much to the classical Flora.

Madee, the spouse of Prince Waythandaya, is always regarded as the model wife.

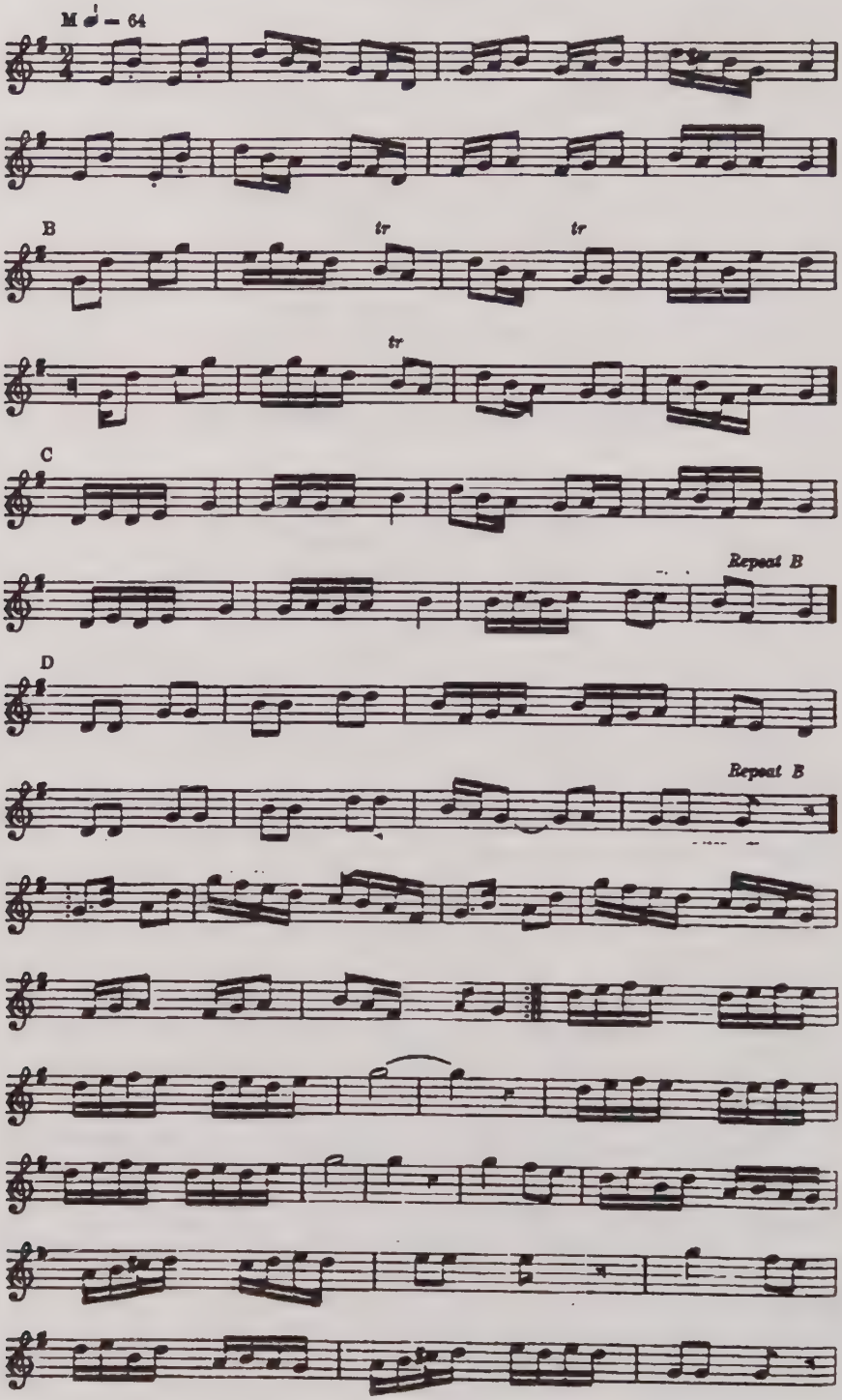
Ameh! "mother!" is the invariable exclamation of all Burmans on all possible occasions of astonishment, anger, doubt, or delight.

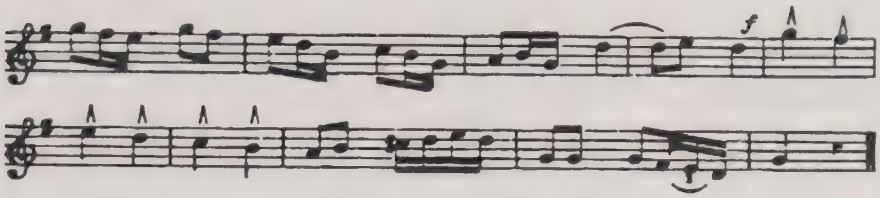
The name Hanthawaddy, properly applied to the whole province, is, in songs, usually employed to designate Rangoon, for rhythmical more than any other reason, just as Mamyay, or Myay, or Man, stands for Mandalay.

"Rosebud fairies," called bohn-gyoh, are daughters of nats, who having stayed in the country of the dewahs for a thousand years, are obliged to come down to the seat of man again. They are born from roses. Such charming houris apparently particularly affect Rangoon.

The following is the score as written down by Mr. St. Clair:—

KAYAH-THAN





Next to the "Sound of the Trumpet" the Doh-bat-than is probably the most popular air, and is certainly the next most familiar to the English ear. It may be called the refrain-song, and is remarkable for the long dwelling and trilling on the last note of each stanza. The doh is the seed with which aim is taken in the game of gohn-nyin-htoh, and pat, or bat, is to twist or spin. The metre here is not so complicated :—

SERENADE

Love united,
Troth so fondly plighted,
Love's light with life first lighted.
Sigh, my dear,
In me here,
Long with fear,
Now thou'rt near ;
Long and sigh, my dear.

Flew the storm-cloud,
Rose and shrieked the winds loud,
Came I yet and lowly bowed.
Cold as lead
Here I sped,
For love dead
Bent my head,
Lonesome for love dead.

The thehn-nats play,
See through wild rain I stray,
Drenched, but sad from thee away :
Sad and lone.
Sweet, my own,
Be not stone,
Hear me moan,
Sweet love, hear my moan.

Love, the cloud-rack,
Flashed blue gleams of hope back,
Broke and furled its fringes black ;

Here I wait
At thy gate;
Open straight,
Be not late,
Hot with hope I wait.

My pet is fair
With flowers twined in her hair,
Kerchief gold-meshed like a snare,
Like a net
Fairly set
Hearts to get,
Sweet my pet,
Mine lies in that net.

Courtly story
Tells of queenly glory:
My queen's as fair and more, aye.
Eyebrow tint,
Just a glint,
Slightest hint
Of art in 't,
Eyebrow's pencilled tint.

Painted cheeks sweet,
Nosegay where all scents meet,
See, I throw me at thy feet.
There is none
To be won,
No not one
'Neath the sun,
Like my love there's none.

The thehn-nats are certain spirits, or superior beings, who preside over the showers. It rains whenever they come out of their houses (the stars), to sport about and have mimic fights in the air. The thunder and the lightning are the clashing and shining of the celestial arms. When the sun is in the house of the goat it is very hot, and the thehn-nats do not come out. To arouse them from their lethargy, if the rains are long of coming, it is a common custom in country places to have a lohn-swè-thee, a tug-of-war. A chain or a stout cable is got, and the villagers divide themselves into two parties, and pull and shout and get up as much excitement as possible, to stimulate the thehn-nats to exert themselves also. A lohn-swè-thee sometimes continues for nearly an hour without definite result.

The "painted cheeks," or "fragrant cheeks," so frequently mentioned in all these love-songs, refers to the thana'kha, a sweet-scented, straw-coloured powder made from the bark and roots of the *Murraya paniculata*, a flowering shrub of the citron species. Some girls, and especially some actresses, have particular recipes for making up the cosmetic into a moist paste. It is applied with the finger, and a good deal of skill is exhibited in putting on the requisite amount. Unpractised hands usually smear on far too much, and it cracks and looks unpleasant. On others it is barely visible. All girls use it, and not a few town dandies.

The following may be regarded as somewhat of an approach to the European *vers de société*. I have not attempted to imitate the original metre :—

THE CIGAR-MAIDEN OF MADEYAH, NEAR MANDALAY

Thy cheroots, so deftly fingered,
Famous are in Burma's land,
Many a chief has fondly lingered,
Watched the maiden's nimble hand.

Madeyah, I'd spare to sing thee
For cheroots and dainty maids,
For their crispness doth but bring thee
Sorrow from the palace blades.

By the throne's great gilded grandeur
Sits the prince, cheroot in hand,
And behind him little Mah Nyo,
Pearl of all the village band.

Burnt up all my love and sighing,
Like the ash of his cigar ;
Hopes dispelled and idly flying,
Like the smoke he puffs afar.

Thy cheroots so deftly fingered,
Madeyah are silver-white,
But the prince that came and lingered,
Stole away the hamlet's light.

# CHAPTER XXXII

## THE TAWADEHNTHA FEAST

NEXT to the uproarious merriment of the New Year's feast in the spring, the festival of Tawadehntha is probably the most joyous and striking of the Burmese religious ceremonies. It is not of universal observance. Some districts keep it up with much more pomp than others, but are not always equally enthusiastic every year in the way in which they celebrate it. In Rangoon and Mandalay, however, it is carried out regularly with greater or less magnificence, and preparations for the procession and the performance of the mystery play often go on for many months beforehand.

The feast commences on the first of the waning moon of Ta'soungmohn, about the beginning of November, and lasts over three days. It is commemorative of the Lord Buddha's ascent from the earth to preach the Sacred Law to his mother, Maya, then a Queen of dewahs in Tawadehntha, the second nat-heaven. He was staying at the time in the country of Thawattee (probably the place now called Fyzabad), in the Zaytawoon monastery, and thence in three steps compassed the distance to the nat-heaven, situated above the Myemmoh Toung, the centre of the universe.[1] Arrived in the nat-seat, the Buddha preached a sermon on the duties of filial gratitude, to a vast congregation of byammahs, nat-dewahs, and arahats, and having expounded the Law which was to lead them into the noble path of deliverance, descended

[1] He had just finished a display of miracles on an immense road, constructed by him from one side of the world to the other, before a crowd covering an area of thirty-six yoozanas. The leader of the heretics who challenged the display of wonders, a man named Poorana, was so overcome with chagrin that he tied himself to a weighted jar and was drowned.

again by a magnificent ladder composed in separate strips of gold, silver, and precious stones, to the neh'ban kyoung, where he received the usual pious offerings of the people on his arrival, on the day of the full moon of Thadingyoot.

To recall this event in the Buddha's life is the object of the feast, and the preparation of the stage often takes considerably over a week, notwithstanding the facility with which bamboo buildings are run up in Burma. A platform is prepared, from twenty to fifty or sixty feet in height, according to the subscriptions and the scale on which it is intended to carry out the performance. Over this is raised a gaily-decorated pya-that, the tower-like spire with seven diminishing roofs, characteristic of sacred buildings, and leading up to it is a sloping way, representing the Soung-dan, the path by which Shin Gautama ascended. Sometimes there is a similar sloping descent on the other side, figuring the ladder which led down to the monastery in the neighbourhood of Sampa Thanahgo, but more often the ascent and descent are compassed on the same slope, which comes to an abrupt end six or eight feet from the ground, on a level platform, covered by an ordinary roof, if it represents merely the earth, or the sacred pya-that if it does duty also for the neh'ban kyoung. Half-way up there is sometimes a covered stage, representing the Oogandaw hill, on which the Lord Buddha found purchase for his final step to the nat-dewah country. On the first day of the feast, usually about eight o'clock at night, the whole scene being lighted up by the brilliant moon, occasionally rather spoilt by smoky torches and the evil-smelling fumes of open crude-oil lamps, the procession begins. The image of the Teacher of the Law, always represented sitting cross-legged, is mounted on a little carriage, fitted to run on a tramway reaching right up to the top, and is dragged up by means of a rope and a windlass. This is done slowly and in a rather jerky fashion, partly because the apparatus does not admit of greater expedition, but principally to prolong the function as much as possible, so that all the people may see it and greater merit may be gained. Surrounding the Buddha is a great company of worshippers from all the higher seats of the universe, earthly kings in royal dress, the white umbrella

borne over their heads, and ministers and pages at hand with trailing robes and gorgeous peacock fans; nat-dewahs and their rulers in rainbow hues, with wings on arm and thigh; byammahs from the thoughtful realms of the upper sky; a glittering throng, all uniting in praise to the Saviour of the World, the chant rising and falling on the night air as they slowly ascend. As a general thing it takes quite an hour to get up. There are many doxologies to be sung, and the performers, all laymen from the town, have paid many rupees for their dresses and want as many people to see their grandeur as possible. Technically, on the first night the image should go no farther than the Oogandaw hill, but, as already said, this half-way house very often does not exist at all, and even when it does there is usually no more than half an hour's halt, and then the procession goes on to Tawa-dehntha, the spire-covered platform on the summit. There the gay throng gather round the image in the attitude of adoration, and a man with a powerful voice stands behind it and declaims the sermon written down in the sacred books as having been preached on the occasion. The subject is filial piety. "I, the great Sramana, the mightiest of all beings, the teacher of neh'ban and the Law; I, the all-powerful, who by my preaching can lead my mother into the path of salvation and the final deliverance; I, who know all things and have beat down the passions under my feet; even I, with all this can but repay the debt due to one of the breasts that suckled me. What then can man offer in love and gratitude to the mother who nourished him at her breast?"

The sermon takes very much less time than the ascent. There is a Burmese proverb—

> Sah nahtoung thaw
> Tayay pyaw.
>
> When the Pohn-gyee preaches
> No harm the sleeper reaches;

that is to say, no great evil can befall you when you are assisting, in presence of body, if in no other way, at the exercise of so meritorious a ceremony as the expounding of the Law. Accordingly the great crowd, who have been

looking on with much interest at the progress up the taper-lit soung-dan, commence generally to prepare for sleep in the zayats which surround the place where the stage is, or failing accommodation there, curl themselves up as comfortably as may be under the bullock-carts which brought them thither. A still greater proportion, however, gather together in circles to have a gossip, and this talk, accompanied by much smoking and chewing of pickled tea and betel, goes on till far into the night. An excuse for the scant reverence paid to the sermon, to which none but a few white-haired men and women listen, is, that what part of it is not in Pali is in such sugga-gyee, such a lofty and stilted style of Burmese, that no one can follow it. Accordingly the discourse is hurried through and the performers come down, and after putting off their fine clothes receive the congratulations of their friends. The image remains all night in "Tawadehntha," and the following evening the descent is made with similar ceremonial, and so the dramatic part of the festival is concluded.

But this is very far from being the whole of the proceedings. On both days numerous presents are made to the yahans and offerings to the pagodas, and these are carried round about the town and by circuitous routes to the monasteries, so that the greatest amount of pleasure and publicity may accrue to the donors.

Chief among these offerings are always huge spires, some of them fifty feet high, representing Tawadehntha, and similar to that on the summit of the stage platform. They are made of bamboo covered with pasteboard, glittering with gold and silver paper and painted in many colours, and are carried by ten or twenty men, on long bamboo poles. Round about them dance all the youth of the quarter they are presented by, young men and girls, all in their brightest clothes. In Rangoon scores of these offerings wend their way to the monasteries under the shadow of the great Shway Dagohn.

Mingled up in the procession come white umbrellas, gold umbrellas, lofty bamboo poles with gilt balls quivering and swaying at the top, big pasteboard images of nat-dewahs, beeloos, princes, and animals, from the crawling turtle to

the familiar two-legged (or six-legged, which you please) horse, all of them surrounded by their group of vigorous dancers. Most characteristic of the day are the padaytha-bins, a sort of Turanian Christmas-tree, representing the fabled wishing-tree of the Northern Island and the heavens of the nats. In those regions the fairy branches bear whatever is wanted, from a savoury ragout to a complete suit of clothes. Upon earth the quivering bamboo twigs carry, dangling by strings, whatever the bazaar shops will supply, packets of scented soap, matchboxes, razors, clasp-knives, little looking-glasses, coloured-glass tumblers, candles, and dolls; and piled round the roots are heavier and more useful articles — blankets, mats, bales of yellow cloth, and earthenware or lacquer begging-bowls. These trees, each with its attendant band of dancers, are carried round and finally deposited before the house of the head of the monastery. Occasionally a ngway padaytha is offered, if the inhabitants of the wealthy districts of the town are particularly pious. This silver padaytha is a tree similar to the rest, except that from its branches hang exclusively rupees and smaller silver coins, each wrapped up in a piece of tinsel or coloured paper. These silver trees, some of which are worth from 500 to 1000 rupees, are more frequently presented to the pagodas than to the monasteries. In the former case the custodians of the shrine take charge of the money for the purposes of repair and the payment of watchmen; in the latter, the kyoung-thah-gyee, the kappeeya dahyaka, or lay steward of the monastery, receives the money, as indeed he takes the miscellaneous collection from the other wishing-trees, and dispenses all for the benefit of the kyoung and the giving of alms to poor travellers. It is noticeable, however, that the ascetic Soola-gandee monks would altogether refuse to accept such a temptation to break their vows as a silver rupee tree.

Spires and umbrellas, padaytha-bins and hobby-horses, hover about the streets on the way to the monasteries all day long throughout the duration of the festival, and at night, after the mystery play is over, the bands which have been performing sedulously all day crash out again on the night air, and fragments of plays and songs are to be heard

everywhere. Chief among the night amusements too is the presentation of the nagah, the huge serpent-like dragon, a great monster often considerably over a hundred feet long, formed of thin paper, distended on bamboo hoops. Each of these has a handle attached to it and a lighted taper fastened inside, and is carried by a man. The body is white, shading off into a blood-red head and jaws, and as the creature writhes its long folds and twists and darts from side to side of the road, the effect from a distance is very fine and startling on a first view. He plunges and coils about till the candles are nearly burnt out, and then is deposited with other offerings on the pagoda. All through the day and night there are generous people about, ready to give meat and drink, cheroots and betel, to any passer-by who chooses to afford them an opportunity of acquiring merit, for any act of charity accumulates koothoh, even though the object aided be base.

The offerings to the monks are also not confined to the fruit of the padaytha-bins. On the third day of the feast the image of Shin Gautama is carried away from the bamboo erection and dragged through the town in the early morning, the monks following with their begging-pots and receiving the abundant alms prepared for them at the Sohn-daw-gyee feast, which is intimately connected with that of Tawadehntha, and commemorates as much the Lord Buddha's issuing from the neh'ban kyoung at Sampa Thanahgo to beg for his food on his return from the second heaven, as the pious gift of nogana, made after the long fast, by Thoozata.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### A SOHN-DAW-GYEE FEAST

IT is written that in the solitude of Ooroo-wehla a woman named Thoozata vowed an offering to the spirit of the place, if she should have a male child. The prayer was granted, and the offering prepared. A thousand cows, new-calved, were milked; five hundred more were fed with this milk, and then with theirs two hundred and fifty more, and so on until the six noblest and best of all her herds produced a milk of surprising flavour and richness. This was boiled with sandal and fine spice in silver vessels, and fine ground rice, from chosen seed, set in new-broken ground, was added. Wonderful signs attended the preparation of the offering. A tha-gyah brought fuel to the fire; the great Brahma held an umbrella over the silver lota; four kings of nats sat by and watched; while subject spirits infused rich honey into the nogana. When it was ready Thoozata sent a servant to clear a place under a tree in the grove that she might make her offering to the wood-spirit. Sounama, the servant, found Shin Gautama sitting under the bawdee-tree. It was the day on which he attained the neh'ban of the passions, on which he became the Lord Buddha, and his face shone with a splendour beyond that of nats. Sounama returned and told her mistress that the spirit of the grove had appeared in person to receive the offering. Thoozata poured the nogana into a golden cup, worth a hundred thousand pieces of silver, such a cup as is always presented to the payah-loung on the day wherein he becomes Buddha. Then she went to the grove, and prostrating herself humbly, made her offering, turned on the right, and retired. The Lord Buddha bathed

in the river Neritzara, at a place where more than 100,000 Buddhas had bathed, before obtaining the supreme intelligence. Then he divided the nogana into forty-nine mouthfuls, ate it, and mounted the throne, whereon he sat for forty-nine days tasting no food, and combating Mahn Nat, the spirit of death and sin. But ere he lapsed into meditation he threw his golden bowl into the river. It ascended the stream swiftly, floated steadily for a short time, and then sank in a whirlpool far down, leagues beyond the earth into the country of the nagahs, where it fell against the golden bowls of the three previous Budhs with a clang that resounded throughout the four worlds, and all things worshipped the present Lord:

> King and high Conqueror! thine hour is come.
> This is the night the ages waited for.

This event in the life of Shin Gautama is commemorated in the Sohn-daw-gyee pwè. Sohn-thee is a sacred word set apart to denote the eating of members of the Holy Assembly, and, in remembrance of Thoozata's historic offering, the mendicants are feasted annually by the pious, with a splendour and profusion far exceeding the ordinary alms poured daily with unstinting hand into the begging-bowl. The date of the feast does not exactly correspond with the original event. According to the chronicle, the Lord Buddha attained the first state of neh'ban in the month of Kasohn, about April, whereas the feast of Tawadehntha, with which the Sohn-daw-gyee is always immediately connected, is celebrated after Lent, at the full moon of Ta'soung-mohn in November. The festival is essentially one of the town rather than of the country. Except the New Year's Feast, none of the religious celebrations can be really called universal, and the Sohn-daw-gyee perhaps least of all. Villages and small country towns cannot get together the splendour necessary to distinguish the occasion from the ordinary domestic feasts, or even from the daily almsgiving to the mendicants. It is therefore in a large town like Rangoon, where there is a certain amount of money, and a facility for acquiring or borrowing ornaments and frippery, that the festivities are best seen. There the *fête*—the word is more appropriate than

any implying more of a religious character—assumes the appearance of a gigantic reception, or *conversazione*. Streets and quarters of the town make up a common purse for general decorations and the erection of stages for hired troupes of actors, in addition to individual effort. The dates are arranged beforehand so that no two streets shall make their effort on the same night, and so lessen the enjoyment of the public, or draw away from the expected number of spectators. A committee is elected, or appoints itself, and having got as much money as possible, hires the best available dancers and actors for the zaht pwè, if possible a puppet troupe also, and in addition, as many unattached mummers and clowns as can be got, whose business it is to dance up and down the street in the guise of dragons, snakes, nagahs, and demons of all sorts, and amuse such of the visitors as cannot get near enough to see the set play, or prefer walking about talking to their acquaintances. Bands are engaged in profusion, flower-garlanded arches erected at the ends of the street and at intervals along its length, and gay Chinese lanterns hung up everywhere. Complimentary packets of le'hpet, pickled tea, serving as invitations, are sent out in profusion, but the non-receipt of one of these does not deter anybody, and all comers of whatever nationality are welcome.

Nowadays the monks are wont to complain that the presents customarily made them at the Tawadehntha feast are not nearly so valuable, or even so satisfactory, as they used to be. But it is different with the Sohn-daw-gyee *fête*. There the emblems of the archetypal nogana are all edible and of the most sumptuous kind. In every house the offerings for the ascetics are set out for display all night long and make a goodly show, if the process can hardly be supposed to improve them for consumption. Mountains of cooked rice send out spurs of beef and pork, with flat lands of dried fish and outlying peaks of roasted ducks and fowls, the legs with their claws and the neck with the head and beak being extended as if they had been drawn out tight to exhibit their greatest length. Nga-pee, fish-paste, in all its malodorous varieties of nga-pee goung, sehn-tsa, dhamin, nga-tha-louk, abounds, and loads the air with suggestions of a

fish-curing village, or an unclean fishmonger's in the dog days. Chinese patties of sugar and fat pork, plates full of fried silkworms, maggots from the top of the cocoa-nut tree, salt-pickled ginger and fried garlic, and a variety of other dishes beyond the ken of occidental cookery abound all down the long tables. Alternating with these, and perhaps more pleasant to look at, are heaps of fruit, oranges, citrons, shaddocks, plantains, with here and there a late durian or two, rivalling the nga-pee in its odour, and the brick-red or purple rind that conceals the luscious "snows" of the delicious mangôsteen. Plentiful tins of sardines and Reading biscuits, with somewhat muddy-looking Bengali-made lemonade, give evidence of the progress of "civilisation"; and plates of betel with the fresh green leaves of the betel-vine suggest how the morrow's afternoon will be passed in well-filled meditations by the pohn-gyees of the neighbouring monastery.

The house itself is decked out on a corresponding scale of magnificence. To the uninitiated foreigner an ordinary Burmese hut presents about as unfavourable raw material for decoration as can well be imagined. Built of rough teak planking, or of split bamboo mats, and raised a few feet off the ground on posts, it resembles a marquee tent in shape and in size (according to the principle of the old Joe Miller story about the stone which was as big as a lump of chalk). On all ordinary occasions there is not a vestige of furniture in it. A row of earthenware pots with water, a couple of wooden boxes, and the rolled-up mats and blankets whereon the household sleep, are the only things to be seen. The sides and ceiling are grimed with the smoke of the fire that cooks the daily meals; the floor stained with smudges of oil and red blotches of betel. Yet this unpromising shanty the Burman transforms into a palace chamber, or stage-like fairy bower. The sides of the house are thrown up towards the street, so that the room assumes the appearance of a verandah. The floor is covered with thick bamboo matting finely woven, over which bright-flowered rugs are spread. The dingy sides of the house are draped with flags and kullagahs, elaborate stitched pieces of tapestry, ten or twelve feet long, and reaching down to the ground. White, or

brilliant-coloured chintz, or paper, forms a roof studded with red, blue, or green stars and rosettes of tinsel paper. Great mirrors, swinging and other lamps, statuettes of wood or stucco, candlesticks with glass shades, clocks, German half-crown engravings, and gay Chinese lanterns hang or stand about. The floor is literally covered with silver and gold cups and betel-boxes, of all sizes, from that of a soup-tureen down to a breakfast cup. Some are plain; some of that *repoussé* work at which the Burmese silversmiths are so clever. The great majority of these are of course borrowed from friends (of another street or quarter) or hired for the night from the chetty pawnbrokers. A few chairs and tables stand about for any European visitors who may come, and who are sure of a friendly welcome. At the back of the room in a long line, behind the mirrors and statuettes, sit the girls, decked out in their most expensively embroidered skirts and gayest silk neckerchiefs. They are literally loaded with jewellery. Round their necks and over the bosom hangs the broad network of the dahleezan, formed of silver or gold fishes and flowers linked together. The na-doung, the huge gold plugs or circlets in their ears, sparkle with rubies and emeralds. So do the bracelets on their arms and the rings on their fingers. Each girl as she sits is worth many hundred rupees. It is probably for this reason that they are made so inaccessible, seated behind the lamps and lights. If admiring swains could get at them, so could other individuals, whose regard for the jewellery might exceed that for the commandments. The young women may therefore be supposed not to care so much for the Sohn-daw-gyee *fête* as their brothers. Most of the girls are of course daughters of the house. If, however, the householder has not womankind enough, he simply goes out into the bazaar and hires as many personable-looking damsels as he may find necessary. They are as much a part of the display as the silver cups and the looking-glasses. A band at one end of the room discourses music fitfully. Occasionally a girl, too young to have attained to the dignity of jewellery, gets up and dances and sings for a while. Musical instruments of different kinds, pattala, hnè, and mee-gyoung, harmonicons, trumpets and alligator guitars, lie scattered about here and there for the

amusement of skilled visitors, and there is always somebody thrumming or tootling away on them.

The whole scene is an unceasing round of laughter and gaiety. The host and hostess and a few old women bustle about and receive the visitors, point out the most noteworthy parts of the display, have a few words of conversation, and offer refreshments. The guest drinks a cup of singularly washy and saccharine tea or lemonade, smokes a big green cheroot, or chews a fid of betel, compliments the owner of the house, declares he never saw so much magnificence in his life, and departs to go through the same performance in the next house. Englishmen are always welcome. Seats are brought for them ; the master of the house sits by while they are under his roof, explains everything to the best of his ability, and produces the inevitable bottle of brandy or beer, without which no European is supposed to be able to endure existence. The reception begins at eight, or half-past, and lasts for an hour and a half or so. Then every one who is coming has arrived, and has gone the round of his friends, so that the domestic display is pretty well over. The gorgeously-arrayed females gather up their skirts, and go off home under a guard of their male relatives, and having put off the greater part of their jewellery, come back, each with a huge green cheroot in her mouth, to see the play and join in the fun. A few of the older people remain indoors, steadily chewing betel, comparing notes as to past displays, and speculating as to whether any other street in the town will be able to surpass the display of Eighteenth Street. Not a few placidly go to sleep, notwithstanding the din without, the strident sounds of the band, the shouts at the buffoonery of the clown, and the confused chatter of thousands of voices. Outside there is no slackening in the jollity. From the lofty stage representing the second heaven of the nats, portions of the Law are declaimed ; the celestial beings deliver themselves of sugga-gyee, lordly sentiments, revellings in exuberant verbosity, all night long, and the constantly-shifting audience never thins away. Farther up the street a huge pasteboard demon is gambolling unwieldily, half a dozen dancers twirling and twisting vigorously within a foot or two of its great tusked jaws. At intervals some of the

youths of the street, or some of the visitors, worked into a state of excitement by the music, dance enthusiastically in an unattached kind of fashion for a few minutes, and then suddenly break off with a laugh. Some of the young men spend most of the time flitting about the extemporised stalls, tasting at one place fish jelly, at another queer salads, having a violent flavour of garlic; here smoking a cheroot, there chewing a packet of pickled tea, and flirting in turn with all the girl vendors, who look very coquettish with the red or white flowers in their glossy black hair, and the fragrant, yellow thana'kah toning down their complexion. Not in the least shy they are, and quite ready to bandy Oriental compliments with new acquaintances. It is with many of the younger folks the pleasantest part of the feast—and is not the old duenna sitting behind—what matter though she is asleep—to play propriety? And so the merriment goes on all night, fit occupation provided for all; sleep or high moral declaimings, combined with the clown's comedy for the elderly; abundance to eat, and a surfeit of gossip for the lazy and middle-aged, and indiscriminate love-making and dancing and noise for the young. At length, with dawn of day, which in those low latitudes corresponds with the rising of the sun, the ascetics come round in grave yellow procession, their hands clasped round the thabeht, their eyes downcast. The bowls are filled; the rest of the feast is carried humbly to the monastery by the donors, and the Eighteenth Street Sohn-daw-gyee pwè is over. The celebrators sleep all day; the state of digestion of the monks is not a matter for discussion; and those visitors who have got new ideas from what they saw last night, lose no time in making use of them for the better glorification of their own *fête*, which comes off a few days later.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### A WORK OF MERIT

"THE wisdom that made Asia mild" laid down no command which is better observed in Burma than the first of the Five Rules: Thoo a-thet go ma that hnin (Thou shalt not take any life at all). Hardened convicts will not harm the vermin that infest their mattresses. A story is told of a man who allowed the snake that had killed his father to wriggle away unmolested through the tall elephant grass. I myself have seen a Burmese mother take up between two bits of bamboo the scorpion that had stung her little son, and simply throw the hideous creature out of the house. So far does the command to beware how they harm any meanest thing in its upward path lead earnest Buddhists. Mr. Edwin Arnold tells how, in a distant age, the great Lord Buddha offered up himself to preserve "this breath of fleeting life" in an animal:

> Drought withered all the land; the young rice died
> Ere it could hide a quail.

When between the hot walls of a nullah, our Lord spied, as he passed, a starving tigress, with two little cubs whining for the nourishment her shrunken frame could not give them. Then, heeding nought but the immense compassion of a Budh, the great yahan bethought himself:

"Lo! if I feed her, who shall lose but I?" and, throwing off his priestly robes, came forth with a "Ho! mother, here is meat for thee!" and died.

"So large the Master's heart was long ago," before he came upon earth for the last time to teach the Law and

give the millions peace; not only when he came down from the hills, where in austere fastings he had been pondering to win the secret of "that curse which makes sweet love our anguish," and appeared before King Bimbasara to plead for the flocks that the white-robed Brahmin priests destined for sacrifice on the altar. The idea has always been a favourite one with Buddhists. A favourite myth is that of the hare. Kalpas since the Lord of ruth appeared on earth in the form of that animal. All creatures were making offerings to the Buddha who was then engaged in preaching the sacred Law. The hare bethought himself that he too must give some alms. But what had he to give? Man might bring costly gifts; the lion found it easy to offer the tender flesh of the fawn; birds of prey brought dainty morsels; fish could produce no less tasty signs of devotion; even the ant was able to drag along grains of sugar and aromatic leaves; but the hare, what had he? He might gather the most tender succulent shoots from the sunny forest glades, but they were useless even to form a couch for the teacher. There was nothing but his own body, and that he freely offered. The Supreme Lord declined the sacrifice, but in remembrance of the pious intention, placed the figure of the hare in the moon, and there it remains as a symbol of the queen of night to the present day.

Similarly just a little below Mandalay on the river, near the Ava road, there is a huge, castellated pagoda, the Shway Gyet-yet, raised in commemoration of another performance of the Budh, in an avatar countless ages ago. The tale is that in a season of grievous dearth, when all flesh was dying of famine, the great Master, then in the shape of a jungle-fowl, spied a holy pilgrim in the last extremity of want. There was none to pity him, none to save him from death, and the Budh, conquering, even in that distant time, one of the latest lost of the ten deadly sins—the love of life—surrendered himself to save another. Hence the pagoda standing out boldly on a great rock over the river. To the east is a representation of a fowl in stone, recalling the event; and before this, daily by the pagoda slaves and others, and on feast-days by hundreds of worshippers, plentiful heaps of gilded grains are strewn.

These personal examples furnished by the teacher of neh'ban and the Law himself, have only served to emphasise what is seen on the admission of every new member to the holy assembly. One of the articles with which, in addition to his dress and begging-bowl, every postulant must provide himself, is a strainer, without using which he must drink no water. The object is, of course, to prevent him from destroying life in the shape of the small animalcula to be found in water. Some zealous and scientific proselytiser endeavoured to persuade the people that this was of no avail, seeing that even in the strained water there was abundance of animal life; but a council decided that, provided the water had been filtered, if the ascetic could detect nothing living, with his unaided eyes, he was at liberty to drink the water without incurring blood-guiltiness. The attacks of science on Buddhism failed as completely as the efforts of most missionaries.

The mingled pity and dislike with which professional hunters and fishermen, whose occupation implies the regular taking of life, are viewed by Buddhists, is well known, and makes itself evident in the fact that the villains in most plays are hunters. Fishermen are perhaps not so much decried —possibly on account of the plea brought forward on their behalf, that the fish die of themselves, being taken out of the water, and not through any direct action of their captors. It is in connection with fish, however, that one of the most curious national works of merit takes place annually—furnishing, like all Burmese festivals, occasion for much fun and frolic.

The violence of the rain during the five or six months of the south-west monsoon floods the country. Not only do the rivers, which in many places rise regularly as much as thirty or forty feet above their hot-weather level—not only do they overflow their banks, and make wide seas of the neighbouring flat lands, but great lakes spring up everywhere. These are gradually stocked with fish of all kinds, most of which, by the sudden fall of the water, are cut off from all chance of retreat to the large rivers, where alone there is safety. Steadily the water goes down, the hot sun sucks up the pools, till at last the end seems to be come. The river

is far away, and there will be no rain for months. Another day or two will suffice to bake and split into long fissures the bottom of the puddle, wherein are yet hundreds of animate things, from the whiskered mud-fish to the lordly hilsa, the salmon of India. Then the seekers after merit come out, bearing with them big chatties, huge earthenware jars, the size of some of which makes the story of *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* seem very much more credible. Girls and boys, old men and old women, go tramping about in the soft slush, capturing the fish and dropping them into the jars of water. Great laughter there is over the wild plunges and flounderings of the boys, the little screams and "a-mè leh-leh, a-mè leh-taws" of the girls as they step upon a fish, which whizzes away with a suddenness that is apt to disturb the equilibrium, or slip with one leg slowly but irremediably into a hole—perhaps a last year's buffalo-wallow—out of which they are only extricated after much teasing and tickling by the boys. Then there is the stalking and driving of a great nga-gyee into a corner, whence with a flop and a muddy dash, he escapes into the middle again, amidst a chorus of the inevitable amè! "mother," which springs to a Burman's lips on all possible and impossible occasions. There is the caution to be observed in seizing the stinging mud-fish, the gingerliness with which, when he is caught, the waving whiskers are avoided; especially the control over yourself to be maintained if he does sting you, lest you should spoil all your chance of merit in a moment of irritation, by doing him an injury. Sometimes the fish are caught in nets; but this reckless wastefulness in the matter of combining merit with merriment is not very favourably viewed by the neighbourhood.

At last the fish are all caught and crowded together in the sin-oh—the water jars. There is, perhaps, a considerable pause before they are liberated. The nga-hloht pwè usually occurs a little after the carnival of the water feast, when everybody is doused with water; and if the fish have been rescued from their danger some time before that, they have to wait in their uncomfortable quarters all the longer. The *fête* seems to be celebrated with more enthusiasm in Maulmein than in any other large town in Lower Burma.

In Rangoon the spruce merchants' clerks are apt to sneer at it as a "jungle feast," and rather laugh at the gatherings on the banks of the "Great Royal Lake." But in Maulmein it is different. There everybody enters into the spirit of the thing with religious fervour. A great procession is formed, and winds its way along the long snake-like up-and-down street that constitutes the great part of the town. At the head comes a band of young men dancing—some with their faces whitened with chalk, others grimed with soot; some extravagantly dressed as princes and ogres, others scantily arrayed in a tucked-up waist-cloth—capering and prancing along with the waving of hands and fantastic pacings characteristic of the national dancing. Behind them, in a bullock cart, is the band, the huge seing-waing, the circular frame with its octaves of drums, on which the performer, smoking a big green cheroot all the while, thumps away with great vigour and in excellent time, accompanied by some trumpets, a flute or two, and a young fellow with a noisy bamboo clapper. Then there is an indiscriminate crowd of well-dressed, excited people, carrying huge umbrellas, white and gold; big spires; young fellows on hobby-horses; men with long bamboos, gilt from butt to tip, looking like fishing-rods, with which one might bob for whales. Mingled with these are the carts carrying the jars of fish. In the middle is a great long platform on wheels, supporting a pasteboard and bamboo and painted mat model of a steamboat. The captain, in a gold-bordered cap, occupies the greater part of the ship forward, and yells orders to the man at the helm, who ports and starboards with surprising rapidity and impartiality. The chief engineer divides his time between keeping up the smouldering cigar-stump and the cotton which supplies the smoke from the funnel, and whistling violently on his fingers. A man stands at the side, heaving the lead (a joint of bamboo stuffed with cotton). It seems to be "And a half, nine," when some one is hit on the head, and "teen bahm milla nay"—three fathoms and no bottom—when the lead fails to touch anybody. A lady in English dress, with her face brought to the proper colour with chalk, represents the passengers. This performer is of course a boy, and usually

affords most amusement to both native and English spectators. The fun goes on all the way with jokes at the expense both of the performers and the lookers-on, and shouts and roars of laughter at every new buffoonery. At last they reach the spot on the river-bank selected for freeing the fish, and after a few pious formulæ have been recited, the contents of the jar are capsized into the water. Many of the fish are already dead, and not a few are so sickly that there is little chance of their recovering health and strength again; but this does not disturb the equanimity of any one. A great koung-hmoo has been done, much merit has been gained, and there has been great fun over it. The motley procession wends its way back again, and everybody goes at nightfall to see the great kyee-gyin pwè given by some public-spirited and drama-loving quarter or street in the town.

## CHAPTER XXXV

### THE NEW YEAR'S FEAST

ALTHOUGH religious festivals and *fêtes* are so abundant in Burma, it is undoubtedly true that none of them are universally observed in all parts of the country, except the New Year's Feast. In localities where the people are exceptionally pious, the end of Lent may be more carefully observed than elsewhere, some devoting themselves especially to pious observances, others to the more worldly ceremonies of the sohn-daw-gyee feast. The Tawadehntha festival is an annual observance in some districts, in others it practically passes over unnoticed. Similarly with all the minor *fêtes*. But it is not so with the thi'gyan pwè. All over Burma, from the smallest jungle hamlet to the crowded streets of Rangoon and the straggling suburbs of Mandalay, the New Year is ushered in with the old formalities, and with perennial enthusiasm. Not an hour is cut off from the allotted number of days, and every item of the old practice is carried out with the same vigour.

For this reason the "Water Feast," as it is called by Englishmen, has forced itself on the attention of the most careless observer, and every one who has written about Burma devotes a greater or less amount of space to a description of the good-humoured merriment with which the New Year is introduced. I do not propose, therefore, to do more than allude to the lesser known formalities observed on the occasion.

The month Tagoo, the first of the Burman year, occurs in the spring, and New Year's Day is in the earlier half of April. But it does not fall annually on the same day.

It is a movable feast, and the date of the commencement of the year is regularly fixed by the royal astrologers in Mandalay, who make a variety of intricate calculations, based on the position of various constellations.[1] The object is to determine at what time the king of the tha-gyahs will descend upon earth, for it is his arrival which will inaugurate the year. The Dewah king is fairly punctual, and the descent occurs always between the 9th and 12th of April. For the last few years he has appeared on the 11th, and scoffers in Rangoon declare that he will probably continue to do so to save the Pohnnas trouble. These gentlemen annually draw up a thi'gyan sah, a kind of prophetic almanac for the year, relating what is likely to happen, and whether it will be prosperous or not. These vaticinations depend upon a variety of circumstances. The tha-gyah min may come down wielding a spear, when there will be disturbances in the land; a water-jar, when the rains will be abundant and the crops good, a torch or a simple staff.

It is from those objects that he bears with him, all of which are ascertained by previous inspection of the heaven and comparison with ancient precedents, that the astrologers are able to determine the exact time when the descent will be made. Other particulars are learned from the animals on which the nat-king rides. Sometimes he has a cow, or a buffalo for a mount; at other times he bestrides a nagah, when there are sure to be very heavy rains; a galohn, on the other hand, presages violent squalls and atmospheric disturbances. When the tha-gyah min goes on foot with a lantern in his hand and shoes on his feet, it is a sign that the heat will be very great and prolonged. Besides this the king of the superior heavens, the Boomazoh-nat, the spirit guardian of the earth, exercises also a considerable influence on the coming year, though he has nothing to do with its commencement. The pohnnas, therefore, are at great pains to find out his exact position at the beginning of the month Tagoo—whether in the trees, the flowers, or the paddy stubble. Each of these temporary habitations

[1] Since the annexation the duty of fixing the date of the new year has fallen on the Chief Secretary to the Local Government.

has its special signification, and the discovery of them is not only valuable in itself, but serves as a most satisfactory corroboration of the truth of the events prognosticated by the movements and surroundings of the tha-gyah king. The conclusions are all carefully noted down in the thi'gyan sah, and great piles of these are carefully preserved in the archives of the palace library, seldom to be looked at again.

Besides the events which are to happen in the coming year the astrologers are also able to determine whether the tha-gyah min will remain three days or four days upon earth. If he stays three days it is called a mahtoolè year, if four, tawtoolè, and the water-throwing is carried on a corresponding time.

All these points are settled some time beforehand, so that every one in the remotest part of the country may have due notice, and then information is sent to the heads of monasteries, and the chief districts, and all is made ready to receive his nat-majesty with proper honours. When at last the day comes round, all are on the watch, and when the wise men give the signal, tha-gyah min chah-byee, the king has come down, a cannon is fired off in the palace, and forthwith all the people come out of doors with pots full of water, the mouths of the jars filled up with fresh green leaves and twigs of the sacred tha-byay tree. A formal prayer is said, and the water is poured out on the ground, and all are happy. Not many years ago an event happened which singularly impressed true believers in the royal city. Just when expectation was at its highest and all ears were strained in expectation of the roar of the cannon, there was a terrific thunderclap, which made all the town quiver, and demonstrated the accuracy of the pohnnas' calculations. There was no more thunder that night, and the ranks of the pious received great increase during the ensuing week. In country towns and villages every one who has a gun rushes out into the street at the appointed hour and fires it off. Most wonderful blunderbusses and old flintlocks and ancient rusty horse-pistols make their appearance, warranted to make a noise, but capable of little more. After this ceremony is over a few go to bed,—for the descent is always made at midnight,—but the majority sit up and talk.

With the earliest glimmer of light all rise, and taking pots full of fresh clean water, carry them off to the monastery to present them to the monks—not to throw over them, such liberties are never taken with the brethren. After having made their kadaw, "begged pardon with water," to the sacred order, they set off to the pagoda and there commence the yah-thohn pwè, the washing of the images. It is not to be supposed that these really require cleansing any more than the recluses do, but it renders them myatta-thappè, an expression not to be rendered by many words in English. It combines all the meanings of cleanliness, beauty, stateliness, proper position, majesty, and repose; and the laving with water is merely a recognition of this fact. The work is usually done by women, and they reverently clamber up and capsize their silver and earthenware goblets of water over the placid features. There are scores of them at work, and the ceremony is soon finished. Then all set off home again, and the jovial part of the festivities begin. All along the road are urchins with squirts and syringes, made of tin and bamboo, with which they have been furtively practising for the last few days, and their experience develops itself in extreme accuracy in catching you with a stream of water in the ear. Young men and girls salute one another mostly with cups and goblets of water, and stifled screams and shouts of merriment rise everywhere. Before breakfast every one is soaked, but no one changes, for it is fine warm weather, and there is lots more water to come.

During the day there is a regular going round to pay the compliments of the season. It was a great kadaw day in the palace at Mandalay, and all the nobles and officials went to "beg-pardon," and worship at the golden feet—not with water however. Similarly inferiors pay their respects to their superiors and masters; children to their parents, scholars to their teachers, and juniors generally to seniors. There is water everywhere, more especially on those parts of your dress which cling most uncomfortably to you. The girls are the most enthusiastic in the matter, and as they generally go in bands and have a copious reservoir in the shape of big jars along with them, the unprotected male is routed in no time. Some zealous people go down to the river or creek,

wade into the water knee-deep and splash water at one another till they are tired and the thing begins to seem monotonous. No one escapes; in fact no one would care to get through the three days with dry clothes, for the wetting is considered a compliment. A clerk comes up to his master, shekhoes to him, and gravely pours the contents of a silver cup down the back of his neck, saying yay-kadaw mee, "I will do homage to you with water." A polite, but less humble form of speech is yay-loung-thee, to "pour" water over; while equals, and the young people generally, yay-pet-thee, "splash" one another with the utmost vigour. It is to be observed that dirty water is never used. I think, however, the barbaric innovation of squirts ought to be put down. They concentrate the stream in a most aggravating way, and it is almost a luxury to have an honest splash from a basin afterwards, even though it do catch you in the small of the back.

Foreigners do not object to the custom, except perhaps some of the more pompous and stolid natives of India, whose minds are incapable of appreciating a joke in any form whatever. The rollicking Chinaman takes it up with the utmost zeal, and sets about the thing in the most business-like way. The last time I was in Maulmein one of the storekeepers in the main street had rigged up a garden hydrant in front of his house and connected it with the well. A coolie was engaged to work it all day, and a continuous jet of water, sufficient to put out a small conflagration, streamed from the nozzle the entire duration of the feast. Not only was Boon Tek enabled to drench everybody, but he advertised his machines and made a good thing of it.

But the Chinaman was exceeded in zeal by a young Englishman in Prome, not many years ago. He was a Government official, and there were two friends dining with him. A note came round to him from a neighbour in the next street saying that the yay-pet-thee girls were out and would be round his way shortly. So he forthwith made preparations. The Madrasi "boys" got a huge bath tub on to the verandah, and tin pannikins were placed handy, and the dinner proceeded. But unfortunately there was no one put to watch for the arrival of the girls, and the first notice

of their appearance was a well-directed stream of water in the nearest man's shirt-front. To sally forth was the work of an instant, but it was found that the tub was in the possession of the enemy, and only served to eke out the abundant supply they had brought with them in big silver bowls. The three Englishmen were soaked through at the first discharge. But the English boh-gyee was not to be discomfited so easily. He rushed through a perfect cascade, and seizing the first damsel he came across, incontinently plunged her in the bathing-tub and soused her under. This filled the rest with dismay, and they forthwith took to their heels and ran, followed as speedily as her clinging garments would permit, by the offended beauty who had been so unceremoniously treated. The occurrence was rather unfortunate, for the girls were all the daughters of some of the principal Burmans in the town, and it is a very grave impropriety for a man to lay hands on a woman even in joke; how much more to duck her in a wash-tub and wet all her hair! That young official had no more compliments paid him at New Year's time, to his own loudly expressed regret.

The most ludicrous story I have heard on the subject of the water-feast may serve as a warning to Englishmen who arrive in Burma in April. The victim reached Rangoon on the second day of the water-feast, and having no Indian outfit got himself up in a tall hat, frock-coat and the rest, to go and present a letter of introduction. After much trouble and irritation, caused by the meanderings of his ghari-wallah, not by any means alleviated by the heat—for the sun is usually at its hottest in April—he arrived at the desired house, and proceeded upstairs. On the verandah he found three or four Burmese girls, who forthwith asked permission to throw water on him. He naturally supposed they were asking whether he wanted to see the master of the house, and nodded violently. Whereupon they capsized their bowls of water over him, including the hat in the libation. The astonished man took it to be a custom of the country to cool down over-heated foreigners, but thought the soaking of his "stove-pipe" an unnecessary detail. Just then the owner of the house appeared, having retired previously to get some money to buy himself off a ducking,

and having been informed of the state of affairs, burst into a fit of such violent laughter at the griff's notion of the ceremony as roused in the latter a wrath so fiery that it almost dried him again.

A special feature of the New Year's Feast was the formal washing of the king's head, called thi'gyan daw gyee. It is not to be supposed that his majesty washed his head only once a year, or that it is at any time an operation to be lightly undertaken, any more than it is by the humblest of his subjects. But at other times the ceremony is called hkoung-say mingala or thi'gyan daw hkaw, and is not attended with so great solemnity as characterises the function at the opening of a new year. Formerly the water for the purpose was annually brought up from Hkoung-say Gyoon (Head-washing Island), a little rocky islet situated on the river opposite Maulmein. Hkoung-say Gyoon is fabled to hang, with its little cluster of pagodas and monasteries, by an invisible cord from the heavens, and has therefore long enjoyed a special sanctity, not by any means reduced by the springs of clear bubbling water found on its limited surface. Therefore for long it supplied all the water for the royal head-washing. Latterly, however, it has been abandoned, and with this there is a curious history connected. After the war of 1826, it was settled in a general way between the commissioners that the river Salween should form the boundary between Burma and the newly-acquired British province of Tenasserim. But later a question arose as to the ownership of the islands, and especially of the rich rice-growing Beeloo-gyoon, north and south of which the three rivers flow into the sea. After much fruitless palavering it was determined to leave the decision to chance. A couple of cocoa-nuts were tied together and taken some distance up the Salween and thrown into the water in the middle of the river. They went down bobbing gaily till they came to the place where the conflicting currents of the Gyaing and the Attaran come in, and there they twirled and twisted about in an aggravating way until at last an eddy caught them, and, carrying them past the old town of Martaban, decided for the Dayè outlet, through which they were swept away to

sea. Thus the "Ogre's Isle" became British territory, and with it the little Hkoung-say Gyoon. Nevertheless for many years water was still carried up to Mandalay for the thi'gyan daw gyee, till at last Pegu was annexed to the British crown. Then it seemed undignified to carry the sacred water, not only from the stranger's land, but so many miles through alien waters, and so it was necessary to seek for another place. Where could a better be found than the mighty Irrawaddy itself? Accordingly, since then, the necessary amount has been drawn from the centre of the river by the Yay-kyee-woon, a minister specially appointed for that purpose, and woe betide him if it does not raise a satisfactory lather!

As in so many other cases the amenities of the thi'gyan pwè have led to the extorting of money. In the good old days, and in the country districts still, it was the practice for benevolent people to keep open house, and give food and dainties to all passers-by, with tea and flavoured drinks, cheroots and betel for those that preferred them. To lighten the expense, contributions, called kè-boh, were invited from friends and neighbours, and out of this has sprung the system of blackmail prevalent in Rangoon. A bevy of girls go into an Englishman's house and sprinkle him with lavender-water, or the moss-rose bouquet, so favourite with Burmese belles. After a little badinage, they produce plain water, and threaten further operations unless something is given them. This they usually get, and if Englishmen complain of shameless extortion it is their own fault. The fair speculators are not such as any respectable girl would care to be seen with, and the prettinesses with scents are no more national than the scents are themselves. A provincial beauty would infinitely prefer a good honest ducking with vulgar water to the mawkish sentimentality of *eau de Cologne*. Some of the results of superior civilisation are very undesirable.

On the final day of the feast a gun is fired at noon to signalise the ascent of the tha-gyah min to his happy realms again, and then all is over. The squirts are laid by for another year; clothes are hung up to dry, and nothing remains but to wait and see whether the pohnnas are more successful than usual in their prognostications for the year.

## CHAPTER XXXVI

### A BOAT-RACE

It is four o'clock in the afternoon, and the sun is still beating down fiercely on the mile and a half broad stretch of water which extends far above and below Myan-oung. But the whole population of the town, and excited family parties from a score of villages round about, are gathered on the banks of the Irrawaddy, and bustle about regardless of the heat. Girls with flowers in their hair, and the brightest of dainty silk handkerchiefs floating over their dazzling white jackets; their costly skirts trailing on the half-muddy, half-dusty grass, and the long loops of their dah-leezan necklaces swinging about on their bosoms, hurry hither and thither with unwonted activity, regardless of the detriment to the fragrant yellow cosmetic on their cheeks and necks, and heedless of the occasional remonstrances of the guardian duennas, hardly less excited than themselves. Young men, ordinarily scrupulous as to the jaunty set of their flowered turbans, and the carefully-arranged folds of their hundred or two-hundred rupee waistcloths, now rush backwards and forwards, apparently aimlessly, their goung-boungs twisted on anyhow, or hanging loose round their necks, and the cherished pasoh girded up tightly round their loins, reckless of creases; while they have not a word to say, or even a glance to throw at the fairest of the country's daughters. Staid old men are gathered together in knots, all talking together at the pitch of their voices, and jingling bags of rupees in one another's faces; every now and then one group rushing off to another and swelling loud talk into shouting, in a fashion of which you would not have believed

the phlegmatic old gentlemen capable, if you had seen them three days ago. Everywhere is bustle and excitement and anticipation. Even the township policemen have lost their ordinary official swagger, and are engaged in eager converse with individuals who, in ordinary times, command their attention in quite a different way.

There is very good reason for it. The full moon of Thadin-gyoot is past; it is well on in October, and it is the time of the boat-races. For weeks past the Myan-oung boat has been spurting up and down the long straight reach, or having a heavy training paddle to Akouk-toung and back again, and now at last the great day has come. Myan-oung has challenged Thohn-kwa, hitherto the unconquered champions of all the low country, and the race, in best-and-best boats, is to come off this afternoon. The down-river men with their boat, and pretty nearly the entire body of their fellow-villagers, arrived last night, and none except the privileged have seen anything of them yet, to enable them to judge whether they are in as fine form as they were last year when they rowed the Bassein boat to a standstill. No wonder there is excitement, for Myan-oung is but a young subdivision, sprung up since the English occupation, with no speciality for paddlers, and Thohn-kwa cherishes a name for prowess on the river from far back in the old Burmese days.

But suddenly there is a lull in the buzz of talk, and every eye is directed up the river. The boats have started for the preliminary row over the course. It is necessary to propitiate the guardian spirits of the river, and the votive offerings are therefore to be made. At the stem of each boat crouches a man holding with outstretched arms a bunch of plantains, some cooked rice, flowers, and betel, for the behoof of the water-kelpie. This precaution must on no account be omitted. Who knows what disaster might not otherwise happen? The flouted nat might upset the craft with a flip of his finger, or cling to the keelson of the boat and tire to nothing the sinews of the brawniest arms. Therefore goodly alms are given, so that all may rest with the prowess of the rival crews. This breather serves also another purpose. It enables the spectators to have a final view of the antagonists, and to lay their last rupee or not on their champions according

as their judgment or loyalty bids them. Not a man of them will back the enemy's boat. If they have not supreme confidence in the superiority of their representatives, they simply refrain from staking all they possess. But in all the vast crowd there is not a man who has not a money interest of some kind in the race. There is Oo Ohn, the district magistrate, in the "grand stand"—a primitive erection run up in half an hour with some sticks and bamboo matting; he is a Thohn-kwa man by birth himself, but nothing will persuade him to back the fishing village against the sub-division over which he now rules. Why, he has practically built and furnished all the money for the Doung-sat-pyan himself. The water-craft which he learnt in his native place has only prompted him to hang with greater loving care over the lines of the boat when it was building, and Bah Too, his eldest son, wields the steering paddle in the Peacock, the pride of Myan-oung. Now the old gentleman—he pulled a good oar himself twenty years ago for the very town he now longs to beat—moves about uneasily, gets up and sits down, winds and unwinds his white paw-lohn, and can hardly refrain from shouting out, for the Peacock is just passing, and Bah Too gives a yell and flourishes his paddle, and there is a great shout of "Youk-kya!" from the Myan-oung partisans. Youk-kya, or youk-kya bah-thah, means simply "man" or "man, the son of his father," but it is a defiant challenge, or an inspiriting cheer to the Burmese. They are a fine, strong-looking lot, the Myan-oung crew, perhaps a little too fleshy, and therefore possibly deficient in staying power, but all young, and worked up to a state of nearly frantic enthusiasm by the presence of their sweethearts and the momentous duty that rests upon them. Their weather-beaten old trainer paddles alongside of them in a little canoe, and begs them to be calm at the beginning and not rush themselves out at the start. The boat is a beauty, and does credit to the old magistrate in the sweeping curves of its lines. Low and as light as skilled hands can make it, it draws only a few inches of water, and does not rise much more than a foot above the surface. So thin are the sides that the boat is tourniquetted together with twisted wire and bamboo, and the seats themselves serve more to stiffen

it and prevent a wrench from doing any harm, than as conveniences for the paddlers. There are twenty-four of a crew all told, and the boat is fifty feet long. It is painted all black, save at the bow, where there is a brilliant representation of the peacock, from which it takes its name. At the end they come with a great spurt, shouting and bending to each stroke, and another great yell rises from the bank to assure them of the approval of their townsmen.

A length or two behind them comes the Thohn-kwa boat, paddling along composedly to the time of their celebrated rowing song, a mysterious, gusty air that has suggestions of the swirl of the river eddies and the rustle of the wind in the tall kaing-grass that lines their native creeks, in its varying measure. It comes over the water gently enough now, but many is the time it has swelled like a hurricane-blast and left the opposing boat foolishly as if it were at anchor. The Thohn-kwa crew are as different as possible in appearance from their robust young rivals. There is probably not a man under thirty among them, but there is not a superfluous ounce in all the wiry twenty-four. Every thew is tough as whip-cord, with long struggles against the rush of the current in the flooded creeks; every face and arm and shoulder is deep brown with exposure to the wind and the sun, for not a man among them but is a fisherman, and thinks nothing of the wild squalls that sweep over the delta and ruffle the swift current into a dangerous surge. No wonder they have an unbeaten record; and Oo Ohn fidgets about uneasily when the famous pè-nin of the Thohn-kwa boat salutes him obsequiously as the boat sweeps up.

No one knows how old Koh Kyah-gyee is. His withered face and shrunken body suggest that it is time he was giving up fishing and endeavouring by assiduous piety to get his balance of kan somewhat more on the right side towards another existence, but he is "hard as nails" still, and no man in all Burma has a greater name than the ever-victorious Thohn-kwa steersman. None like him to keep a boat straight in the conflicting eddies that have thrown out many an apparently conquering boat; none like him to gauge the strength of his crew and spurt just at the right moment! From start to finish he has all his wits about him,

and the stem of the boat is full on the winning-post all the time. Four years ago, when the Hlaing men seemed to be carrying all before them, it was Kyah-gyee's generalship that won the day. Therefore the Myan-oung magistrate is a little disconcerted at the homage paid him by his old rowing mentor, but none the less he puts on another hundred rupees with a Thohn-kwa loo-gyee who comes up at the moment. The Thohn-kwa men come with a bit of pace just at the finish too, and with a heh-la, loo-la, youk-kya, bah-thah, hé, dash past the winning-post.

This winning-post is not such as is used in English boat-racing. A boat is moored right out in the current with its head to the stream. At right angles to its length a long hollow bamboo stretches across the bows, and through this is passed a rattan, the end projecting an inch or two beyond the mouth of the tube at both sides. The contesting boats have each their own side and keep their own water, and the bow-paddler rises and snatches at this pan as the boat whisks past. It thus becomes a sign and proof of victory. Not a little skill is wanted on the part of both the man at the bow and the man at the stern. The former has to be sure in the eye and quick of hand, and the latter must take especial care to bring the boat past at the proper distance. It is not so very simple a matter to pull out the long cane at the terrific pace with which the boats come up, and the pan must be carried off to ensure the verdict. Sometimes both men seize it at once, and then they are almost certainly swept out of the boat, and as a rule both lose the rattan.[1] But if one has the pluck and presence of mind to stick to it, then his boat has won.

Now the offerings have been made and the boats turned round, no very easy matter in the swift current with their great length. But it is effected dexterously enough. The Myan-oung boat paddles up to the winning-post and young Oung Zahn tries the pan to see that it runs smoothly in the bamboo, and Koh Kyah-gyee swings in the stern of the Thohn-pan-hla—the Three Fair Flowers, as the Thohn-kwa boat is called—to make sure that his man will have his proper amount of cane to grasp at. Then both boats get

[1] Then it is a thayay pwè, a dead heat.

under the bank to avoid the force of the current, and paddle leisurely up to the starting-point, a mile or a mile and a half up the river.

The din and bustle on the bank now become greater than ever. Every one is talking and stating his views as to the result of the race, and nobody is listening to him. Betting goes on freely, and the chink of rupees is heard perpetually. It is announced that the sporting English extra assistant-commissioner from the divisional town has given as his opinion that "the fishermen" will win; they are in better condition and cooler-headed than their opponents, and will win at the finish. There is a minute's dejection at this, and then it is all effaced by the discovery that the Chinese storekeepers have put their "bottom dollars" on the home boat. That is good news, for the Talohk is a good judge of anything that can be betted about, and it is very seldom that he drops money. So the talk goes on till the last coin is staked. Welshers have not yet been introduced into Burma, and there is now nothing to be done but relieve one's feelings in talk, and puff furiously at big cheroots, with an occasional rush into the water to see how far the boats have got up. Old Oo Ohn tries to talk to the young Englishman, but it is no use, he can't keep either his mind or his eyes off the boat, and the Ayaybaing improves the occasion by attempting a flirtation with the "daughter of the house." But he might as well talk to the winds. She is far more excited than her father, and would be dancing about if it were not for the restraint of her old nurse, who is too blear-eyed and rheumatic to be anything but ill-natured.

But at last there is a hush and every eye is turned up the river. The boats are turning, and come drifting down to the starting-place. There is a minute or two of backing and fussing about so as to get the boats straight and the bows level, and then, with a loud shout, they are off to a start by mutual consent. A roar of pent-up excitement comes from the crowd all the way down the banks to the grand stand and then swings back again like a wave on the flat sea-sand. Served by their magnificent boat and their younger strength, the Myan-oung crew jump off with the lead and continue to draw away until half-way down the

course, where they are clear and have a bit of daylight to spare. The backers of the Peacock are wild with triumph, and already see victory before them, but the Thohn-kwa party are perfectly composed and declare that things could not be going better. Quarter of a mile from home old Koh Kyah-gyee lets out a yell, and though there is no apparent quickening of the stroke, the gap, which for the last few hundred yards has remained unaltered, suddenly disappears, and the Thohn-pan-hla creeps steadily up the Peacock's thwart, and at last Oung Zahn, the Myan-oung bow, sees the enemy's boat for the first time since the start, and a few seconds later the rival bow is level with him, and the nose of the Three Fair Flowers shows in front to the length of its figure-head. The noise on the bank is simply deafening. Incoherent shouts of despair and encouragement and delight burst from every throat; old women tear down their scanty hair and work with their arms as if they themselves were in the race; girls rush to the water's edge heedless of the mud and splashing that will ruin their silken skirts for ever; young men and boys rush up to their necks in the water and yell with frenzied eagerness, for it is only a boat's length to the winning-post, and Thohn-kwa leads by a foot. Old Oo Ohn can stand it no longer, for the last minute he has been shaking all over as if he were in a palsy, and his tongue and throat are as parched as if they were choked with slack-lime. He rushes forward with his hands in the air and shrieks Youk-kya in a key that cuts through the din like a steam whistle. Youk-kya—the cry is taken up; Youk-kya, bah-thah—every mother's son of you—the Doung, the Flower, sway lay lay; row for your lives; row for your unvanquished name; and the two bows fling their paddles from them and rise for the struggle. The wink of an eye too soon and he will miss his grasp, the flick of a finger too late and there will be nothing to seize. A great hush falls on the vast crowd as if they were all stricken dead, and then both men disappear in the water, clutching apparently simultaneously at the rattan. An agonising five seconds, and then Oung Zahn comes to the surface brandishing on high the pan; the Thohn-kwa bow felt the scratch of it on his palm as it disappeared through the tube.

The scene that follows is beyond description. The victorious crew spring up to dance, but the relief is inadequate. They can only escape frenzy by plunging into the river. Oo Ohn tucks up his waistcloth and dances round in mad delight till his stiff old legs will bear him no longer. Pompous old loo-gyees caper and plunge and shout; younger men can only relieve their feelings by flinging themselves in the pools on the bank and rolling about wildly in the mud; girls, who at ordinary times would hardly dare to raise their eyes to look about them, dance and shout in ecstasy, and their married guardians join in the rout. Bands from a dozen villages round about strike up, but the professional dancers who came to perform in honour of the victors are fain to look on while their intended audience go through unpremeditated figures. It always seems marvellous how the people ever get gravity of demeanour again after a great boat-race.

The contest is technically not over yet. It is a hlay-pyoung loo-pyoung, that is to say, the crews have now to change boats. The Thohn-kwa men take the Doung-sat-pyan, and the home crew man the Three Fair Flowers. But to all intents and purposes the victory has been won, and the home representatives are the conquerors. The two boats paddle up again, and the fishermen go right away and win with the most consummate ease. This sets money matters on a more comfortable footing, but the Myan-oung people are not a whit disconcerted. They won the real race, that in which each crew rowed in its own boat, and they receive the arguments of the Thohn-kwa contingent with the most self-satisfied composure. The record of the champions has been broken, and the veteran Koh Kyah-gyee has at last sat in a losing boat.

A general adjournment is made back to the town. The country people have all come in their bullock waggons, and these are drawn up in comfortable places under the trees. The victorious crew go in procession up and down the main street, preceded by bands and every one in the place who can dance. Feasting is general, and then all move off to the plays, of which there are three or four, while some unwearied spirits can only find relief for their exultant triumph

in yehn dances and irresponsible performances of their own. Till dawn of day the revelry goes on, but there is nothing like drunkenness. It is exceedingly seldom that you see a drunken Burman out of Rangoon, where they claim to be Europeanised. For a couple of days the excitement lasts, and then the strangers wend their way homewards, and the township calms down to its usual quiet. But for years the great event will be talked of at the local feasts, and the Yehn choruses of three or four generations will tell of the gallant struggle when the Doung-sat-pyan beat the Thohn-pan-hla and broke the long supremacy of the Thohn-kwa rowers.

It is a great pity that these old contests are not kept up with the spirit that used to characterise them. In 1877 the then Chief Commissioner of British Burma, Mr. Rivers Thompson, believing that they led to unrestrained and dangerous gambling, issued an order forbidding all government officials to have anything to do with them, and advising that great races should be discouraged as much as possible. This policy was continued by Mr. Aitchison (now Sir Charles), and there seemed some danger that the art of making fine racing-boats would be lost, while all the fun and jollity of the old yay-pwè, kohn-pwè, land and water sports, were put an end to, without any decrease in the amount of gambling. The habit is as engrained with the Burman as with the Chinaman, and if there are no boat-races to bet on there are lots of other things, from pony matches to gohn-nyin-toh, on which sporting votaries might stake their money. There were still local matches between adjacent villages held, but they were but a sorry imitation of the old festivals, and have unfortunately led to the unpleasant speculations of the West being introduced. "Barneyings," in-and-out rowing, and all the unlovely customs of Western professionalism have sprung up as a consequence of the degradation of the old manly sport. Mr. Bernard, now Sir Charles, who was an ardent athlete himself, did a good deal towards reviving boat-racing again. Sports have been held on the Great Royal Lake at Rangoon, it may be hoped only as a preliminary measure to the encouragement of longer contests on the great rivers again. The surest way of putting an end to "roping" and false rowing with the object of mere money

gain, is to reintroduce the old honest, enthusiastic rivalry. Where every rower feels that the name of his village depends upon the prowess of his arm, there will be no "sugaring" and ignobly waiting, in Sheffield handicap fashion, to "have their heads loose."

All the races in the low country are rowed in hlaw hlay, or hlaw loung, that is to say, in paddle-boats. Up country there are frequently contests in hkap hlay, "pull-away boats," rowed with oars, but even there the national paddle predominates. It may be mentioned that the coast men are by far the better rowers. In the Mandalay October races in 1881, a scratch Bassein boat challenged all comers, and was victorious in every match.

There are a variety of boats, mostly, however, made on the same model of which the loung-goh is the type. This is simply a canoe hollowed out of the trunk of a tree, the sides of which are drawn out by charring and inserting wedges; then the boat-builder chips out the centre. The loung-sat is only a little larger and more commodious, plank sides being added to the solid keel, if it may be so called. The huge hnaw, or rice-boats, are made in the same fashion.

Of a different style are the pehn-gaw, huge, ungainly, barge-like things, used principally at Yay-nan-gyoung for carrying oil. Along the sides, projecting over the beams of the boat, and reaching aft to the house raised on the quarter-deck, are tagin, a sort of platform for the polers to walk backwards and forwards on. Pehn-gaw keep mostly in shallow water, so that their ungainly weight may be moved along by poles, which is much quicker and less laborious work than rowing.

Barring exceptionally fine racing-boats, the hlaw ka-daw, or hlaw-gah, the king's despatch boats, are the finest specimens of boat-building. They are gilt all over, even to the kat-tat, or paddles, and the stern rises high up in the air for the accommodation of the steerer. The express boats, or hpoung-paw, have usually a representation of the kalawaik, the carrying bird of Vishnu and national emblem of the Burmese, on the bows, and have often as many as sixty paddlers. Down stream they go faster than a steamer; but they are never seen nowadays.

## CHAPTER XXXVII

### CHESS

I DO not say that the Burmese invented chess, either for the world or themselves. As latter-day English dramatists "adapt" from the French, so Burmese play-writers steal from the Hindoos, and possibly the game of chess was got in the same way. But there is a considerable diversity in one respect. The plays are rendered into Burmese with a stupid fidelity. The sayahs do not even take the trouble of altering the names of men and places, and the only difference in the pieces is that the loo-byets, and occasionally even the actors of higher parts, introduce "gag" of a comic and local description to satisfy the national demand for fun and frolic, and to carry down the prosiness of the staid Hindoo. Chess may have been taken over in a similar way, and altered after the same fashion. I remember once, indeed, hearing an enthusiastic player in Rangoon claim the invention of the game for an ancient Talaing queen. She was passionately fond of her lord; he was equally fond of fighting; and to keep him by her, and, at the same time out of the dangers of the wars, she invented the game of chess. The story has a certain pathos about it, and it would be pleasant to believe it true; but I never came across any other Burman who had ever heard the story, and am afraid the old sit-du-yin player was romancing. But if the Burmans did take the first notion from India, they have greatly altered the game, and not less improved than altered it.

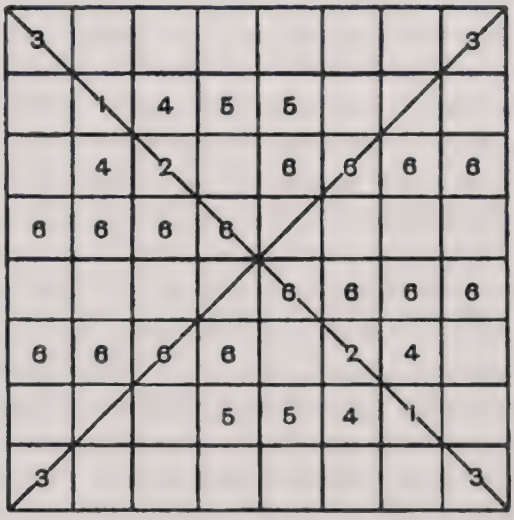
It is generally believed that it is to the Hindoos that the world owes this most purely intellectual of games. Sir William Jones was quite positive on the point, and quotes

from the Bhawishya Puran. This seems all the more mysterious when he proceeds: "The beautiful simplicity and extreme perfection of the game, as it is commonly played in Europe and Asia, convinces me that it was invented by one effort of some great genius; not completed by gradual improvements, but formed, to use the phrase of Italian writers, by the first intention." But the European game is as different from the old Hindoo as the Burmese is from either. The Sanskrit name was cha-tur-anga—literally, the four members of an army: elephants, horses, chariots, and foot-soldiers. But the Hindoo game had four armies on the board; yellow and black against green and red. Each army had a corner of the board to itself, and there were usually four players. One of the allied armies on either side attacked the immediately opposed force in flank, and therefore had an immense advantage at the start. Moreover, the allies were never sure of one another. It was allowed, and even recommended to indulge in treachery. The black king might, in the heat of battle, attack and depose his yellow friend, uniting the two armies under himself against the green and red foe. However consonant this might be with the national character, it can hardly be claimed as a special beauty in the game. A ship, or boat, also figured somewhat mysteriously in the warfare. Moreover, the rule that the piece to be moved was determined by a throw of the dice, by still further complicating the game, virtually ruined all scientific play, and robbed it of more than half of its interest as an exercise of purely intellectual skill. When a cinque was thrown, the king or a pawn had to be moved; when a quatre, the elephant; a trois, the horse; a deux, the boat. With such a method it was impossible to forecast the game —or, in fact, to work on any leading idea at all. Nevertheless, the Hindoo game is undoubtedly very ancient, and has certainly the oldest history of any known form of chess. It is alluded to in the most ancient law-books. The wife of Ravan, King of Lunka (Ceylon), is said to have invented it to amuse her spouse with the image of field war while his capital was besieged, 5000 years ago, by Rama, with his wild hordes of barbarian mountaineers, derisively called monkeys, or satyrs, in the great Indian epic. The Hindoo

game, then, if it really be the first idea, has been no less altered by us than by the Burmans, as well as by the Persians.

The Burmese arrangement of the pieces differs entirely from the Hindoo, though we may, perhaps, imagine a reminiscence of the four armies in the arrangement of the pawns. The pieces are as follows :—

1. Min = one king.
2. Si'kè = one lieutenant-general.
3. Yittah = two war-chariots.
4. Sin = two elephants.
5. Myin = two horsemen.
6. Nè = eight pawns, or foot-soldiers.




The king has the same moves as in the English game, but cannot "castle." Si'kè can move diagonally in advance, or retrograde one square at a time. The yittahs have the same power as the English castle or rook. The sins have five moves, one square at a time—one direct forward, two diagonally forward, and two diagonally backwards. An elephant cannot walk straight backwards, nor can he go sideways. The myins have precisely the same power as the English knight. The pawns act in the same way as in the English game, except that in the initial move they can only advance one square. They may become si'kè, in the event of that piece being taken, by advancing to the diagonal line which stretches across the board. When, however, the pawn replaces the dead leader, he is not allowed to remain on the square where he gained the distinction. He must be placed as one of the eight surrounding checks, at the player's option, and therefore often falls a victim to his new-gained eminence.

From the Q.'s pawn to the Q.'s R.'s pawn, the nè are placed on the third square. From the K.'s pawn to the K.'s R.'s pawn, they are placed on the fourth square in direct *échelon*. The first move, therefore, takes a pawn. The pieces may be arranged behind the pawns according to fancy or judgment. The formation represented in the figure is considered the best among Rangoon players.

Either player, however, may adopt another line of battle. He may strengthen either wing, or expose the king, according as he estimates his opponent's abilities, or the peculiarities of his play. In some respects this may be done in such a way as to be tantamount to giving a piece to an inferior player. The pawns, however, never vary in position. The board is a huge thing like an enlarged foot-stool, or a tea-table without any legs, the players squatting on mats. There is always heavy betting on the games; and when a famous player comes in from the district, or over from Maulmein to measure strength with the Rangoon cracks, the excitement is wonderful, and often furnishes occasion for free fights, such as the Burmese, in their sturdy, hot-blooded way, delight in as much as any schoolboy or devotee of town-and-gown rows.

The Burmese game, as well in the names and powers of the pieces as in the liberty of individual arrangement, is thus, it will be allowed, much more like a real battle than any other recognised form. The elephant is particularly well calculated for defending the king where he is most vulnerable.

War-chariots are decidedly more appropriate to active warfare than castles. Indeed the Briton must acknowledge that the English nomenclature is bad. There was a time certainly when bishops used to buckle on their armour, and charge across the field of fight; but their disestablishment in that way came about long before the day of Mr. Miall. Boadiceas and Shan amazon leaders are too rare nowadays to have queens careering about the board as a regular thing, dealing slaughter for their less nimble spouses. The Burmese general has powers sufficient to elevate him above his men, and is yet not so loftily supreme as the mail-clad knights of romance; while if he is laid low, it is not too violent a change

for the gallant foot-soldier who may win the marshal's bâton. On the whole, the Burmese game is undeniably a good one; far superior to the Hindoo, or the Persian, though possibly not requiring the skill and calculation of the European form.

It may, perhaps, be said that the Burmese would be more likely to get their game from their Mongolian relations than from the Hindoos. This is historically improbable, and a comparison of the games bears out the belief. The Chinese, as usual, claim for themselves priority in the discovery of the game. Unfortunately, however, they fix a date when it was invented, and this is long after the time when the Aryan game is first spoken of. Three hundred and seventy years after Confucius (B.C. 174), Hung Cochee sent a warlike expedition into the Shensi country, under a mandarin called Hem Sing. After one successful campaign, the troops went into winter-quarters. Shensi lies in the north-west, and the weather was very cold; and the soldiers thought of their families, and wanted to go home. Hem Sing, who was a great military genius, invented the game of chess to occupy their minds and foster their military ardour. The soldiers were so delighted with it that they forgot the inclemency of the weather, and their wives and children at home, in the excitement of the new game. So the winter passed away, and in the spring-time Hem Sing took the field again and conquered the entire province, in consequence of which Hung Cochee assumed the title of Emperor, and chess was held in the greatest reverence ever after. So says the book of Chinese Annals.

The Chinese game is a very odd one. The pieces are played, not on the squares, but on the lines. I should have mentioned before that in none of the Eastern games are the squares differently coloured. Midway between the opposed forces flows a river. The king on either side is shut up inside a fortress, out of which he cannot move, but can shift about from one side to the other as much as he pleases. On either side of the fortress are two princes, his sons, who are equally bound to stick to the side assigned to them. There are a couple of elephants in either army, which however being very heavy, cannot cross the slender plank-bridge thrown over the stream for the passage of the other troops.

They therefore remain on the defensive. There are also pieces called paoo—bombardiers or rocket-men—with curious powers. They can move the whole length of the board, in the fashion of the castle. If an adversary's piece intervenes, they can take the pawn or piece immediately behind it, but cannot kill direct. Students of the Persian game will be reminded of the power of their elephant. It will be seen from this cursory description that the Burmans can hardly owe their game to the Chinese. Shin Gautama sent us Buddhism from "the Middle Country";[1] it is possible that the game of chess came from India also. But if so, while Burmese Buddhism has hardly changed at all, and remains much more like the original teachings of the Master than the faiths of Ceylon, Nepaul, and Thibet, the game of chess has been greatly altered, and I think I may venture to say vastly improved.

[1] Myizimadetha, not the "Middle Kingdom" of the Chinese.

# CHAPTER XXXVIII

## GAMES

A VERY favourite game with Burmans of all ages is the gohn-nyin toh pwè. The name is very suggestive. Gohn or hkohn means to jump, and nyin is to deny or bluster, and there is no doubt of the fitness of the implication. A more noisy and contentious game, not even omitting the uproariousness of the English enormity known as "grab," it would be difficult to find. Most writers on Burma have passed over gohn-nyin weing lightly, as a simple, harmless, children's game. It would be well if it were only that, though the monks at the pohn-gyee kyoung often sally forth in great wrath (most dangerous for their future state), and armed with a stout bamboo, to put a stop to the clamorous disputes of the schoolboys over their seeds. But the police officers would tell a very different tale. Grown-up men play also, and the quarrels sometimes end in assault and murder, and always in reckless gambling. Behn-sah-thee-loo, opium-eaters, who with all respectable Burmans stand for types of iniquity, a kind of epitome of vice, often have as much as two or three hundred rupees on a single game, and the results of unrestrained gambling are best known to civilised people, for whom I am writing. Consequently the police keep a sharp eye on grown-up gohn-nyin toh players, and if a party is caught, they are all punished heavily for gambling, the deing, or keeper of the ground, being fined heaviest of all. For there are regular "alleys" kept for the purpose, the deing, or proprietor, carefully smoothing the ground, moistening it delicately in the hot weather, and keeping it from getting sodden during the monsoon. He charges his customers a

small fee for the right to play, usually an anna in the rupee, keeps a supply of seeds ready, and acts as umpire in cases of doubt, or when a tie has to be played off.

The game is played with the seeds of a huge creeper, the *Entada Pursætha*, whose pods are five feet long and six inches broad, and the beans are large flat things, about an inch in diameter, and shaped like a lily or lotus leaf, or the flattened-out gizzard of a fowl. They are made to stand on the stalk side, flat face foremost, a little more than a diameter apart in a long row, and the object of the player is, as in bowls and ninepins, to knock down as many as possible. The players use seeds called doh, exactly similar to those they aim at, or occasionally iron rings, and the distance from which they do so is agreed upon beforehand, but is never less than five or six yards. The doh is spun away in crossbow fashion from the forefinger of the left hand, drawn back by the thumb and finger of the right. As the seeds aimed at are all in a line, there is plenty of room for skill in the way of putting a heavy bias on, as well as in the by no means easy matter of preventing the bean from jumping up and missing altogether. Some old players have a wonderful knack of getting a strong parabolic curve on, which succeeds in levelling a great part of the line. The difficulty of the thing cannot be realised till one has made an attempt one's self, and the result of a few experiments is usually greatly to raise the estimation of gohn-nyin toh as a game of skill.

There are a great many ways of playing it. First, it may be premised that the ordinary value of a seed is two annas, about threepence—that at any rate is the price usually charged by the deing, who always has a great supply of them. Having got his seeds, the player puts down as many as he pleases in the row, five perhaps or ten. There is usually a preliminary dispute about some one who has not put down so many as the others, yet claims an equal chance of winning in the game. These quarrels, after having been noisily fought for a quarter of an hour or so, are referred to the decision of the ground keeper, who settles the matter off-hand, seldom knocking a man out as long as he is sure that he has no more seeds to stake. Then it has to be settled who is to have first shot, naturally among good players a very considerable

advantage. This is settled by a preliminary tournament for the best of one or three shots, the players following one another in the order of their success in the trial. Then it is settled how the game is to be played. Sometimes it is the obvious, barn-door way of each man taking the seeds he knocks down, sometimes it resolves itself into a contest for everything staked, the man who knocks down most taking all the seeds. There are of course numerous bets, but they are more frequently disposed in backing one player against another than in selecting a single individual as the probable eventual winner.

This method, however, of endeavouring to knock down the greatest number of seeds, which is of course the commonest with children, is not so much affected by grown-up gamblers as other elaborations of the game. A favourite form is that called nga-let nga-lohn, where the object is, in five shots to knock down five seeds, neither more nor less. This is not so easy as it might seem, for the seeds are not like marbles, and it is hardly less difficult to make them go perfectly straight than it is to put on the proper "side." Most men try to knock down all five at their first attempt, and then let their remaining seeds go anyhow. Veterans, however, declare that the safest way is to knock down the fifth from the end of the line with your first shot. It then lies as a kind of barrier to prevent the other four, when knocked down, from rolling about and upsetting more than the proper number. The seeds when hit hard certainly have very eccentric methods of spinning and wobbling about. If there are ties, the men of course play off, and the winner takes the whole pool, if the collection of seeds may be so called. The best play is almost always seen in these nga-let nga-lohn contests. The children's form, that of knocking down the greatest number in one or three shots, is called pwet-tha, and is certainly the commonest, except with the avowed gamblers. There are besides these two main forms many other variations occasionally introduced, the commonest being doung-pyit and pay-dan. In the former the seeds are placed in the usual line, but all except the centre are lying on their sides. The players stand much farther away, and the object is to hit the seed standing up. Any one who

does so carries off all. If one of those lying down is hit, the seeds from it to the extremity of the line are taken. In pay-dan the seeds are placed in a big circle. Some one seed, either at one of the sides or at the back, is fixed upon to be hit. Any one who does so takes all, but if any other seed is knocked over you have to pay forfeit, and add one to the circle. This is, perhaps, the most outrageously noisy form of all, and, like the doung-pyit, is very seldom played by any but children.

The deing or ground keeper's services are constantly being called for. A long-armed man is accused of delivering too far forward; some one has got an exceptionally big doh to aim with; one of the seeds knocked over does not fall down flat, but leans up against another; somebody hits a seed already knocked down by somebody else, and by means of it manages to level some of those left standing, though his own seed never touches them; cases of this kind are always cropping up and being referred to the umpire amidst boisterous statements and precedents referred to by everybody present, for the betting spectators are often more deeply interested in the matter than the actual players. Then the police burst in and carry them all off to the lock-up, and they are duly fined for gambling, and English residents who look upon gohn-nyin toh as only an elementary kind of marbles are astonished that people should get themselves into trouble for such a trifle. But for all that, gohn-nyin toh, in its way, requires quite as much skill as either bowls or curling, and judgment and delicacy of touch are quite as essential as in billiards.

Curiously enough, taking gohn-nyin toh for mere childishness, most foreigners look upon "Burmese football" as a game. This is certainly not the case in so far as a "game" is a striving between one or more competitors for supremacy. There are of course different degrees of proficiency, but one man cannot be pitted directly against another to see who is the better player, as you do with two lawn tennis or racket players. Primarily chin-lohn, as it is called, is simply designed to exercise the body, to restore elasticity to the back and limbs cramped by sitting, reading, or writing, or even by playing chess or gohn-nyin toh. The ball is

composed of wicker-work, strips of rattan interwoven in bands so as to leave a number of pentagonal holes, and is about four inches, or a little less, in diameter. It is extremely light, and the object is to keep the ball as long as possible in the air without touching it with the hands. Thus a single individual may play it all by himself, or there may be a circle of players who catch the ball as it comes round their way, keep it up as long as they can, until an ill-judged stroke sends it away from them to somebody else, who proceeds in a similar manner. To play it of course the feet must be without shoes and the waistcloth is tucked up close round the middle, so that the legs may be quite free. It is worth while watching a good player. He starts the ball on his knee, knocking it up, and standing on one leg all the time, or perhaps rapidly changing the knee. Suddenly he sends it up high, catches it with a back stroke with the heel, repeated perhaps several times. Then he receives it on the knee again, gradually and gently reduces the force with which he strikes it, lets it slip down to the instep, and jerks it back and forwards between the top of the foot and the knee for a time. Then from the knee he sends it into the air again, clips it between his cheek and his shoulder; then lets it run down the side to be caught up with a side stroke of the foot, or behind to be sent up by the heel, or forwards to be caught again by the knee. The last is the most difficult, because if hit too soon with the top of the thigh, the ball simply flies outwards, and cannot be saved from falling to the ground, while even in catching it with the knee, care must be taken to hit it gently. Another very difficult manœuvre is to jump into the air, catch the ball between the feet and jerk it up again before reaching the ground. Nasty tumbles are the usual result of first attempts. A good player will keep the ball up until his strength gives way, and most Burmans, if they are not ambitious to attempt difficult strokes, can keep the chinlohn up a very fair time. But it is not easy all the same. No part of the arm must be used, and using the toes is also barred, though in any case, with them a stroke would almost inevitably prove a failure. Still though spectators may stand and look on, and the players may try to give one

another difficult strokes, the skill displayed in negotiating which is always applauded, yet chin-lohn cannot be called a game, any more than dancing the Highland Fling can, for judgment as to superiority in either case must be a mere matter of personal opinion, and cannot be governed by hard and fast rules.

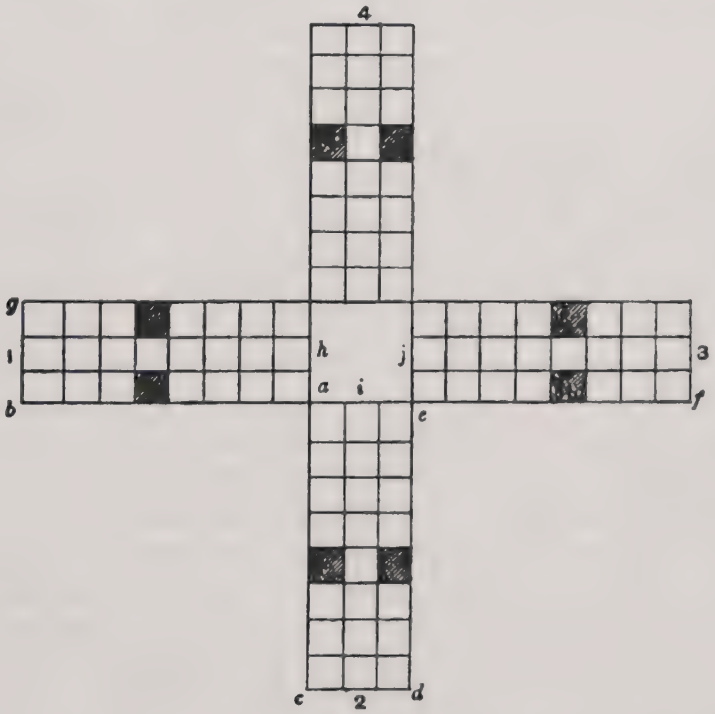
These are practically the only out-door national games. Boxing is a very common institution, but there is no ordinary practice in the evenings, and when a let-pwè comes off it is a regular ceremony more resembling what would be called in Europe a match, or a tournament, than a game. A good deal of agility and skill is shown, leaps into the air, and kicks with the bare feet, and violent upward knocks with the knee finding a place which would not be allowed by the "fancy." The first drawing of blood decides a contest, however slight the injury may be. But in British Burma boxing is not common now. Among the Karens near Maulmein it is still regularly kept up, and no young man would be successful in his courting, unless he had "come off" on some occasion or other at a let-pwè. In Upper Burma contests are of regular occurrence at feast times, and the rule that no women shall be present is always rigorously kept.

What may be called indoor games are numerous and various. There is a game very much like the English one known as Fox and Geese. There are three big tigers, and eleven or sometimes twelve little ones. It is called lay-gwet kyah, and the object is for the big tigers to hunt down on a draft board and eat the little ones. If, however, the cubs can corner the big ones, and prevent them from taking a leap, the latter have to succumb—starve to death in fact. Another game called pasit, or chuay pyit-thee, or ansah pyit-thee is a steeplechase kind of arrangement, and is a favourite with children and simple country people. It is played on a board shaped and divided like that in the figure.

Cowries are used instead of dice, and the object is to complete the tour of the board as fast as possible, and to take as many opponents as you can on the way. Thus if there were two playing, the first thrower would enter at *a*,

and having reached *b*, would continue from *a* to *c*, from *c* to *d*, and so on. The second would commence at *a* also, but proceed first to *c*, thence to *d*, and so on. A third would start from *e* towards *f*, and a fourth in the remaining arm.

The method is as follows. Six cowries (chuay) are taken in the hand and thrown into a plate or cup; if one falls upside down it is called t'sè, and counts ten; two, called pah, scores two; three, thohn, is the same in value; four, lay, equals four; five, upside down, called taseht, scores twenty-




five. When all are on their backs, it is called bahyah, and counts twelve. When all six fall on their faces, chouk, and the value six.

You have three throws to start with, and can only enter with a ten or a twenty-five; after entering you can have only one throw at a time. If you are lucky enough, you may enter two or even three racers, but if you throw three tens running, or three twenty-fives consecutively, the hand is lost to you, you cannot enter even one. If you overtake an opponent and come on to the same square with him,

you kill him and he has to go back to the starting-post, but only if you fall on the same square, and not if he is on one of the shaded squares, called poh or kyah, which are coloured red or green on the board. In this latter case you lose your throw. The game is won by returning home first. Thus the first player having rounded *g*, comes down the middle course and finishes at *h*; the second player at *i*; the third at *j*, and so on. Any number can play, and if there are four, or more, and even numbers, partnerships are formed. When three or more play, it is called mè-thee-dah.

The game is simple and harmless enough, and as there is little chance of gambling over it, pasit is but little in favour with people in the big towns. Tohn-boo lehn, cheating with the weight of the lime used in betel-nut chewing is much more to their taste. This lime, a little of which is smeared on the leaf of the betel-vine that wraps round the nut, is, if of fine quality, often sold by its weight in rupees. Two confederates arrange a speculation together. One of them picks out an eligible-looking bumpkin in the street, some rice-farmer, who has come in with his boat-load of paddy; or a raftsman, who has brought down a lot of teak logs; or a pious man come to worship at the pagoda. He gets into conversation with the intended victim—asks him for a light for his cheroot, perhaps, and brings round the talk to tohn-boo. Then he says he has got a fine sample of it, and draws a packet out of his pocket. The unsuspecting taw-thah admires it and is asked how much he thinks there is, He guesses three rupees weight. The speculator happens, singularly enough, to have a little pair of scales in the folds of his waistcloth. The lime is duly weighed, and the countryman proves to be right—Burmans have a natural faculty for estimating by the eye. The scales and the lime are put away, when up comes the confederate, who has been loitering about at a distance. He pretends to recognise a friend in our farmer, with his old-fashioned zig-zag pasoh and red-tanned face. After explanations he asks who his friend—the man with the tohn-boo—is. The latter immediately introduces himself, produces his lime again, and asks the new-comer how much he thinks there is. He says right off, "two rupees weight"; our taw-thah breaks in,

"No there isn't." "Bet you a-seht (a quarter century, twenty-five rupees) there is." All Burmans love gambling, and the farmer straightway tables his pieces, thinking he has got rather a "soft" thing. The scales come into use again, and the lime weighs two rupees—it is another packet. That night the two rascals are drunk together, and the farmer makes an offering to the nats, persuaded that there is something supernatural in the matter.

Pitch and toss is common enough in Rangoon now, as is also the three-card trick, introductions of Western industry. Pitch and toss is called myouk pan—myouk is the lion and unicorn on the old "Jan Kumpani's" coin, while the pan, the "flower" is the laurel wreath on the other side. Two rupees or pice are spun, and the bystanders call. One says two tails, and if they turn up, he wins double his stake; similarly if he is equally fortunate as to his guess of two heads. If he hedges with a head and tail, he only wins what he laid. The "tossing shilling," and the "lucky penny," of Box and Cox, one of which had no head and the other two, are not by any means novelties in the Pabè-dan, and other disreputable streets in Rangoon.

Another sleight-of-hand trick at which the town loafers are very skilful and are constantly deluding the unwary, is a performance called kyoh toh-thee, tilting at the string. A narrow strip of hide is doubled across, and the doubled end being in the centre, it is wound round and round in a complicated way. Then one of the bystanders is asked to place either his finger or a stick into the centre. The thong is then unwound, and if the man has his finger in the doubled-up end he wins, otherwise the manipulator gathers up the money. It is obvious that manual dexterity may do a great deal in a venture of this kind, and the operator usually makes a good thing of it.

Cock-fighting is also a favourite pastime, and though forbidden by the authorities, is still carried on more or less openly in country villages and quiet streets in the towns. Theebaw's uncle, the deposed Pagahn Min, who died of smallpox in 1880, was so fond of the practice that he went by the name of the cock-fighting king. In independent territory pretty nearly every house has its kyet-hpa, or

its teik-kyet, the latter, splendid-looking birds, being bred specially for their pluck in fighting.

Buffalo fights, which used to be great festivals in the Tenasserim province, especially round about Amherst and Tavoy, have, under the influence of the British Government, almost totally died out. Each village used to have its champion, songs were composed in its honour, and special guards appointed to look after it, and the conqueror brought as much honour to the village as a personal victory of the inhabitants would have done. But they were nearly as brutal exhibitions as Spanish bull-fights, and only a little less dangerous.

Field sports are barred to all but professional hunters by the religious objection to taking animal life, though when a Burman does enter upon the pursuit, he is always an enthusiastic and skilful sportsman and generally a clever shot.

## CHAPTER XXXIX

### LUCKY AND UNLUCKY DAYS

IT has come to be considered an axiom that the Burmese are irredeemably lazy. Some authors who have written about the country ascribe a very great number of additional bad qualities to them; others are more favourable; but all are unanimous in the declaration that they are lazy. The reverend missioner, Father San Germano, who was almost the first European to write a definite account of Burma, is the most unkind critic of all. He gathered together a great deal of information about the country during his long residence, but the opinion he formed of the people would be crushing were it not so strongly at variance with that expressed by a Christian priest who has been still longer in Burma, and whose knowledge of everything connected with it yields to none, the Right Reverend Bishop Bigandet. But it is as well to see ourselves as others see us. The good father says: "The Burmese are distinguished for that timidity and servility which is the characteristic of slaves. . . . There is no contempt, oppression, or injustice they will not exercise towards their fellow-men when they can assure themselves of the protection of government. They are thus vile and abject in adversity, but arrogant and presumptuous in prosperity. There is no one amongst them, however mean, who does not aim at the dignity of mandarin (minister)." But the chief characteristic of the Burmese "is an incorrigible idleness. Instead of employing their time in improving their possessions, they prefer to give themselves up to an indolent repose; to spend the day in talking, smoking, and chewing betel, or else to become the satellites of

some powerful mandarin. The same hatred of labour leads to an excessive love of cunning, and also to thieving, to which they are much addicted. . . . It would seem that it is impossible for this people to tell the truth; nay, a person who ventures to do it is called a fool, a good kind of man, but not fitted for managing his affairs." Still the padre has a little good to say of them: "Besides giving daily alms to their talapoins, they all lay by something to be applied to some sort of public benefit. They are very fond of thus signalising their generosity, and will often deprive themselves of comforts to have the pleasure of being benefactors to the public." This is an unlovely picture. But the good father's head was "on fire."

It is pleasant after this to turn to a soldier's opinion. Major Grant Allen says: "Unlike the generality of Asiatics, the Burmese are not a fawning race. They are cheerful, and singularly alive to the ridiculous; buoyant, elastic, soon recovering from personal or domestic disaster. Free from the prejudices of caste or creed, they readily fraternise with strangers, and at all times frankly yield to the superiority of the European. . . . Indifferent to the shedding of blood on the part of their rulers, yet not individually cruel; temperate, abstemious, and hardy, but idle, with neither fixedness of purpose nor perseverance. Discipline, or any continued employment, becomes most irksome to them, yet they are not devoid of a certain degree of enterprise."

This is a much better certificate, but still we are accused of laziness. Let us now turn to the last and the best authority on the subject (from an English point of view), Colonel Horace Browne, late Commissioner of Pegu. The Burman, he says, "displays much spasmodic energy and general laziness, much love of feasts and shows, much disregard of the sacredness of human life, and much tenderness for the lives of inferior members of the animal kingdom, much arrogance and inconsiderateness when placed in high position, and last, though not least, much general truthfulness, and, amongst unsophisticated villagers, the very unoriental trait of being unable to tell a specious falsehood."

The hauteur complained of towards strangers is principally due to the fact that the stranger is not a Buddhist, and has

not as a boy been admitted into a monastery. To a Burman such a man is no better than a buffalo or a dog. In those of low degree this feeling shows itself in pitying kindness, in those in high positions in arrogance and insulting rudeness.

The terrible allegations of Father San Germano may be considered cancelled by the advocacy of the two military gentlemen, but there remains the united charge of unwarrantable laziness. Let us see what can be said for the defence on this point.

It may be taken for granted that the whole human race is more or less hampered by a dislike for work when there is no necessity for doing it. In addition to sharing this weakness, the Burman is fettered by a multiplicity of fortunate and unfortunate days. When he is born, his sadah, or horoscope, is cast, detailing minutely the moment at which he appeared, and the influence the presiding constellation has over him personally; and this sadah must be carefully examined before anything can be done. But beyond this there are a great variety of unlucky days which more or less concern everybody, and have to be avoided if a man is to hope for success in his enterprise or his journey. To enlist the sympathy of maritime England, I will begin with the superstition about Friday:—

Thoukkya yay gyoung
Ma thwa koung.

On Friday boats sailing
Cause weeping and wailing.

On the contrary, if you begin the study of a subject on Friday you will become an authority on it. Thursday is also a good day; but if you commence on Tuesday or Saturday you will soon die. Saturday is a bad day for everything, especially for fires—a fact which the Fire Brigade would probably corroborate. But doubtless it is somewhat irritating for an Englishman when he wants to commence a journey, and has everything ready except the bullocks for the cart, to find that he cannot persuade his servants to buy or engage them till Sunday, because such a proceeding would bring disaster on everybody connected with it. He declares it is dilatoriness, or the desire to stay and see some

feast; whereas it is a matter of conscience, and was taught to the Burman in a rhyme when he was a little boy at school. Similarly there are regulations as to the days proper for washing one's head. This is a regular ceremony, performed only once a month or so, partly because it takes a long time with the Burman's luxuriant hair; partly because many people, especially in the small Talaing villages in Pegu, believe that too frequent washings would disturb and irritate the genius who dwells in the head and protects the man. Therefore when you collect the bark and saponaceous seeds and other material for the operation, you must remember that it is unlucky to wash your head on Monday, Friday, and Saturday. In the same way, parents sending their boy into the monastery must remember not to cut his hair on a Monday, a Friday, or on his birthday. A Burman's birthday, it must not be forgotten, occurs once a week, and his name recalls the day.

This circumstance gives rise to a number of barriers to the proceedings of the children of particular days, all of which are taught in the linga, the doggerel rhymes of the monastic and lay schools. Pyat-thah-da nay (unlucky days) are as follows: Thursday and Saturday in the months of Tagoo (April), Wahgoung (August), and Na'daw (December). The months do not exactly correspond. Tagoo, the first month of the Burman year, is really half April and half May; Na'daw, half December and half January, and so on; which must be remembered in the months mentioned below. Thursday and Saturday mean that the people born on those days are invariably unlucky in the specified three months, and had consequently much better remain at home, talking, smoking, and chewing betel, even though it irritate good missionaries, like San Germano, than endeavour to do work of any kind which could only result unfortunately. The monastery rhyme may be rendered as follows:

Tagoo the hot, Wahgoung the wet,
Na'daw the dull and chilly,
Scowl on the serpent and the rat,
So rest ye, willy nilly—

the serpent being the sign of Saturday, and the rat of Thursday. Similarly the sons of Wednesday and Friday

are debarred from work in Kasohn (May), Tawthalin (September), and Pyathoh (January);

Kasohn, Pyathoh, and Tawthalin,
These months are right unlucky,
For Friday and for Wednesday
At home or in Kentucky.

Sunday and Monday are bad days in the months of Nayohn (June), Thadingyoot (October), and Tabohdwè (February).

The tiger and the gusty roc
Must shun Nayohn and Thadingyoot,
Eke Tabohdwè with dripping lock,
Whate'er they do 'twill bear no fruit.

The tiger is the symbol for Monday; the Galohn, or roc, for Sunday. Tabohdwè is the foggiest month of the year.

The Wahsoh (July), Ta'soungmohn (November), and Taboung (March), those under the sign of the lion (Tuesday), and the tuskless elephant, Heing—which represents the dark planet Yahoo, and makes an eighth day of Wednesday after noontide—are shut out from active labour.

In month Taboung, 'twixt hot and cold,
Ta'soungmohn, Wahsoh breezy,
Yahoo and Tuesday's human fold
Must take it precious easy.

On the other hand there are Yet Yahzah, "kingly days," during which the Burman will display "much spasmodic energy." Such are Friday and Monday in April; Saturday and Thursday in May; Tuesday in June; Sunday and Wednesday in July; Friday and Wednesday in August; Thursday and Saturday in September; Tuesday in October; Tuesday and Yahoo (noon to midnight on Wednesday) in November; Friday and Wednesday in December; Thursday and Saturday in January; Thursday and Tuesday in February; Saturday and Wednesday in March.

Cease to weary,
Whose lot's dreary,
On these kings of kingly days.

It must, of course, be borne in mind that these days are only lucky for those who were born on them, and not for everybody.

With all this the Burman is in a very considerable difficulty between lucky and unlucky days. If he declines a piece of work because it is his unlucky season, or undertakes it, but delays commencing till his fortunate time shall come round, the foreigner accuses him of laziness in the one case and dawdling in the other. Yet many Englishmen would not sit down as one of thirteen to dinner.

It would be bad enough if this were all; but there are other matters calling for the observance of the Burman if he would consult his well-being. It is ordained for him by paternally solicitous astrologers in what directions he must not travel at certain seasons of the year. This is regulated by the nagah hlè. The Nagah is a huge creature, half dragon, half serpent, coiled round the world, and gradually and steadily crawling in a constantly repeated circle; so that his head is now in one place, now in another; the circuit being completed in a year, and following the direction of the hands of a watch. You can journey from the tail towards the head with safety, but not from the direction of the head towards the tail, for then you would go straight into the monster's jaws. It is safe to go across in any direction. As long as you know the position of the head, therefore, you are safe; and this is recorded for you in the usual linga.

> From March to May, all April through,
> The huge Nagah towards Mount Meru
> His belly turns, his back to south;
> The west he frights with open mouth;
> His tail curled up holds all the east.
> Mark well how lies the grisly beast.

From June to August, therefore, the head is to the north, and you must not go southwards; from September to November the west is barred to you, and from then on till March it is dangerous to go north.

The difficulty an Englishman occasionally finds in getting boatmen to go in a particular direction, or porters to carry his baggage across country, is therefore easily accounted for without any necessity for stigmatising the Burmese as hopelessly lazy and averse to steady labour. The fact that men are always to be got eventually is no argument against

the general belief in the theory, for the English persuade people to all manner of iniquity. Staunch members of the Order of the Yellow Robe will tell you that the brandy-drinkers and the opium-eaters (whom the English Thathana-baing, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and other good people believe to be so very numerous in Burma) are very frequently proselytes, and, at any rate, have been much influenced by the white foreigners. And I think that every officer in the Commission who has at length got together a band of men to journey towards the nagah's jaws, will bear me out when I say they must have been a bad lot, and drank raw spirits and chewed opium enough to gladden the heart of an anti-opium society man in search of a frightful example.

It may be asserted that the unlucky days were invented as an excuse for laziness; but the prevalence of the system with regard to other matters disproves this. For example, the blind god is supposed to laugh at barriers of rank and time and space; but most Burmans have a profound belief in the yan-pet linga—the rhyme of hostile pairs, referred to in the chapter on marriage. Again, in forming a partnership for purposes of trade, or the like, a due regard must be paid to birthdays. Lucky combinations are as follows:—Sunday and Friday, Tuesday and Thursday, Saturday and Wednesday, Monday and Yahoo.

When you get a Burman on his lucky day, he will display an amount of "spasmodic energy" which has surprised many travellers into calling him hard-working. The boatmen on the Irrawaddy and the Sittang often row six, eight, and even ten hours at a stretch, on no more solid food than cold boiled rice, with a fragment or two of salt fish or curried vegetables. But that is when it is their "kingly day." Try them on a pyat-thah-da nay, and they will not even drift with the stream.

## CHAPTER XL

### THE BUTTERFLY SPIRIT

IT is a matter of common knowledge that Buddhists deny the existence of a soul or spiritual principle in man. Each new being, spiritual nature as well as bodily substance, is the product of what has gone before, and differs entirely from the previous being. That faculty which performs all the actions referred by other religions to the soul is by the Buddhist system placed in a sixth sense called manaw, the heart, or faculty of knowing. This sense is as material in its action as any of the others which are denominated seeing, hearing, tasting, and so on. The manaw is, it is true, the most important of all the senses. The eyes, the ears, all the others, are merely channels to communicate impressions to the purely intellectual faculty of knowing; but it is not a separate something, distinct in composition and existence from the material body. The quality and keenness of perception of the manaw is a matter of serious importance to its owner; for it is only by meditation that a man can attain to the higher heavens, and the act of meditating can only be conducted by the sixth sense. The observance of the precepts and the performance of good actions meet with abundant reward in happy births on earth or in the six heavens of the nat-dewahs; but the inward good deeds of the soul are incomparably more meritorious, and therefore the pondering on the lawkee seht, the ideas of creatures yet under the influence of the passions, and on the lawkohtara seht, which are the ideas of those happy beings who have entered into the current of perfection and move about in the regions of pure spiritualism—the consideration of these and

of the sehtathit, or results immediately connected with ideas, throughout all the five stages of meditation up to oopekka, lead to rewards in the twenty superior heavens, where the contemplative gradually frees himself from the thanya, or false persuasions, and acquires a contempt for matter.

All this action has its place in the manaw, or the seat of knowledge, and is duly explained to the Burman when he is in the monastery school, and afterwards, perhaps, in discourses of the Yahans in the rest-houses on feast-days, or other suitable occasions. Unfortunately, however, the matter is, to say the least, a little obscure, and not by any means easily to be grasped. Accordingly, the superstitious Burman having got a confused lot of big words into his head, after letting them simmer there for a while, evolved from his internal consciousness the notion of the leyp-bya, or butterfly spirit.

This personation of the soul in a fairy-like form had natural elements of attractiveness in it ; and the consequence is that the error of the unphilosophical Burman long ago has grown into a present national belief, and it is universally accepted that the life of man resides in the leyp-bya and dies when it disappears. The man at the point of death opens his mouth and the butterfly escapes from the body, but only to die at the same time. Many strange things are explained by this doctrine. For example, the leyp-bya is the cause of dreams. It is not absolutely necessary that the butterfly should remain constantly in the body ; death will not necessarily ensue from the separation. When the man is asleep, therefore, it leaves the body and roams about far and wide. But in these wanderings it can only go to such places as the person to whom it belongs has previously been in. A straying from known paths would cause extreme danger to the sleeping body, for it might happen that the butterfly would lose its way and never return, and then both would die—the body because the animating principle was gone, the leyp-bya because it had no earthly tenement to live in. The butterfly is enabled to perform these journeys through its existence as thway seht, or soul of the blood ; and it is the state of this blood which makes

the leyp-bya more or less inclined to roam, and which directs its movements. If the blood is feverish or excited in any way, the butterfly necessarily becomes restless, and wanders about more or less rapidly and into more or less strange places, according to the degree of perturbation. Therefore it happens that the soul thus existing in itself, and straying or flying at random, sees extremely strange and fantastic visions on these voyages. An elaboration of this notion divides dreams into three special varieties; those which occur at the beginning of sleep, those about midnight, and those in the early morning; or the false, the mixed, and the true. Baydin-sayahs and wise women are for this reason always very particular in their inquiries as to the precise time at which the dream occurred. If they foretell wrongly it is, of course, because the questionist made a mistake as to the time when his vision appeared to him.

These night wanderings of the butterfly spirit are not without their dangers. In addition to other hobgoblins and spectres, Burma is especially plagued by evil spirits called beeloos—creatures in human guise who devour men. If they will eat the corporate man, there is small doubt what will happen to the fragile butterfly spirit should it come across such an ogre. Cases do happen when the leyp-bya is gulped down, and then the man has slept his last sleep. More often, however, it is only a case of leyp-bya lan; the soul is scared, and in its terror sometimes runs into unknown regions, from which it is unable to retrace its steps, when of course it dies and with it the owner; or it rushes home to its bodily dwelling-place with such precipitation that the whole system is disorganised and sickness follows. This butterfly theory, therefore, offers a grand field for quack doctors, of whom there are unfortunately a very large number in Burma. When a man falls ill they dose him with all the drugs and simples they have in their little bamboo phials. If he does not get better after taking even the fungus from the roots of the bamboo, culled in the eclipse, or vegetable soot prepared at the change of the moon, then there can be only one opinion; the leyp-bya has had its system shaken by some ghoulish sight; or perhaps it is being kept in durance vile by some taseht, some demon (in the sense of

the Greek δαίμων), or by a sohn, a wizard. In this case no bodily medicine can be of any use, were it even that celebrated nostrum, the green powder, which contains 160 different ingredients. A witch doctor must be called in, and he resorts to the leyp-bya hkaw. This ceremony is very much like that made use of in ordinary cases of oppression by evil genii, nat-sohs, and witches. Offerings are laid outside the house, or perhaps outside the village, at night—heaps of cooked rice, bananas, salt fish, and other eatables; and the malevolent being, whether ghostly taseht or material witch, is begged to eat this rice instead of the butterfly spirit, and to let the prisoner free. Few are hardy enough to watch and see what happens; but the few who have done so agreed with me in the discovery that the demon appears in the shape of a pariah dog, which does not differ from other pariah dogs in spirit, inasmuch as it will run away if you throw stones at it. The offerings are repeated till a change takes place. Perhaps the taseht is greedy, eats offerings, leyp-bya, and all, and kills the man. Perhaps it is appeased. Then the butterfly spirit returns safe to its owner again, and convalescence sets in. This is called leyp-bya win. Beeloos are never successfully negotiated with in this way; they are too voracious. They occasionally appear in broad daylight upon earth; but may always be recognised, since they have red eyes and cast no shadow.

A particularly difficult operation is to separate two leyp-byas that were intimately united in life. This is especially the case when a mother has died leaving a little infant. If the leyp-bya kwè is not resorted to, the butterfly of the little one will follow the mother, and the child will die. A wise woman is therefore called in. She murmurs some mantras, and then places a looking-glass on the floor near the corpse. Still muttering, but with more and more rapid gesticulation, she drops a filmy shred of cotton down on the face of the mirror, and with frenzied words entreats the dead mother not to retain the infant soul, but let it come back to its earthly tenement. The fleecy down slowly slips down the mirror face and falls off into the handkerchief she holds below, and is then gently placed on the breast of the child. A similar ceremony is occasionally gone through when a

husband or wife is more than usually overcome by the death of the yoke-fellow.

The whole notion is of course foreign to Buddhism, and is viewed with great disfavour by the members of the sacred assembly, but they are no more able to put a stop to it than they are to suppress nat-worship in the subsidiary form in which it still exists. It is somewhat discouraging to those who have the welfare of the people at heart; yet still when one comes to highly civilised countries such as are found in Europe and finds ghosts only a little less demonstratively believed in, a load is removed. The world is very small after all.

The leyp-bya idea, like a good many other peculiarities of the Burmese, occasionally gets them into trouble with foreigners. It is the cause of the great unwillingness all Burmans have to wake a sleeping man. It is obvious from the above explanation of the character of the leyp-bya, that it would be highly injurious to rouse a man suddenly from his slumbers. His butterfly might be wandering far from the body, and probably would not have time to hurry back to its tenement. Then the man would certainly fall sick, or at any rate would be indisposed for a short time. Consequently, it is useless to tell a Burman servant to wake you at a certain hour. He will come in at the appointed time and look wistfully at you, and wish something would fall down and make a noise; but he himself will tread as softly as a housebreaker, and will not even have the heart to instigate somebody outside to make a disturbance. The Englishman has not got "humanity," it is true; he has not been in a monastery, and is therefore not really a "man"; but there is no knowing but what he might have a leyp-bya for all that. Consequently the master is not wakened, and gets up an hour and a half after he wanted to, and storms at the poor Burman for a lazy scoundrel who snores away till the sun is as high in the sky as the pagoda spire, let alone a tari palm.

The same thing occurs out in the country villages. An English assistant commissioner rides unexpectedly into a small townlet in his subdivision and calls for the headman. That worthy is having his afternoon siesta, and the good

wife announces this with a composure which almost surprises the young sub-janta wallah into swearing. He says, "Well, then, wake him, and tell him to bring his accounts along to the traveller's bungalow." Old Mah Gyee shudders at the very thought, and flatly refuses. The Englishman gallops off in a fury at the d—readful impertinence of the people, and Mah Gyee calls together all her gossips to hear of the brutality of the young woondauk, who actually wanted her to imperil her goodman's life. It needs something more than passing examinations and being a smart report-writer to govern the people well.

# CHAPTER XLI

## CHOLERA SPECIFICS

OCCASIONALLY a whole Burmese village or a quarter of the town seems to be seized with sudden madness. Without a moment's warning, apparently, and moved by one common impulse, the able-bodied scramble on to the tops of their houses and fall to work to beat the wooden or mat roofs with bamboos and billets of wood. The old and feeble stand down below and thump unmelodious drums, or bray their loudest on raucous trumpets, while the women and children dance round about and open their mouths and yell. No one has any right to talk about pandemonium till he has been scared by the sudden bursting on the night air of this diabolical uproar. New-comers in Rangoon, mindful of the scares which have been frequent of late years, on hearing the outburst for the first time, are apt to believe that the long-prophesied rising of the "budmash" population has at length commenced, and that the ferocious Burman has started on the war-path. They are the more inclined to believe it because the outbreak always takes place at night, and, at a distance, suggests nothing so much as a general free fight. But it is nothing of the kind; nothing could be farther from it. It is, in point of fact, the regular sequel to a religious ceremony. Cholera has appeared in the district. There have been one or two deaths, and the population is aroused to a sense of the danger. The terrible epidemic is of annual occurrence, notwithstanding all sanitary precautions, at the beginning of the south-west monsoon in May. The first heavy bursts of the rainy season wash all manner of surface impurities, animal and vegetable, into the wells

and tanks, and cases of sporadic cholera are the consequence. So says the civil surgeon; but the Burmans do not believe him. They are convinced that a nat-soh, some evil spirit, has taken up his abode in the place, and is exacting revenge for some real or fancied insult. They accordingly take this means of forcing him to quit; and if the malignant nat can be supposed to have any nerves whatever, it certainly ought to be effective.

The brethren of the monastery discountenance the practice as far as they can—as indeed every one not afflicted with a dulness of hearing might be expected to do. It is a remnant of the old geniolatry, and, having nothing to do with pure Buddhism, confounds the dewahs of the six heavens with the heathenish spirits of the old wild tribes. But cholera is a pestilence that regards not the yellow robe of the mendicant any more than the gay pasoh of the frivolous; and so the pohn-gyees hold the ceremony which immediately precedes the wild riot called thayè tohp-thee, and display their opposition no more violently than by getting out of the way as fast as the dignified walk peculiar to the Assembly of the Perfect permits.

It is related that long ago, at the time of the beginning of religion, the terrible pestilence swept over Kapilawoot, the city of Thoodawdana, the father of the Lord Buddha. Only at the intercession and by the merits of the prayers and good works of the saviour of the world and his assembly, was the plague stayed, and the city saved from desolation—hence the function called pareht yoht-thee. Cholera has broken out in the village. Several deaths have occurred in succession with the terrible suddenness which is characteristic of the disease. The dirges played by the bands for the dead fade into one another and break out all down the street. Then one of the chief men of the place makes preparations and begs the monks to come down from the monastery. A raised dais is put up at the back of the room for the accommodation of the yahans, and covered with mats. Offerings to the holy men are arranged in a long row before the platform—rice, fruit, flowers, betel-boxes, pillows, cups and bowls. Alongside of these are placed the vessels which the monastic superior is to conse-

crate—nyoung yay-oh, sacred to the use of the religious, and pareht-oh, so called from the ceremony. These are partially filled with water, leaves of the tha-byay bin, a species of *Eugenia*, are put in, and along with them coarse yellow string wound round a small stick. When all is ready the monks come down in the grey of the evening, moving, as always, in slow procession of Indian file from the kyoung, followed by their disciples carrying the large monastic fan, or perhaps an arm-load of palm-leaf manuscript books. Meanwhile, and all through the ceremony, the people from all parts of the village come in, each person bearing his pareht-oh, with its supply of tha-byay bin leaves and modicum of yellow string. The pohn-gyees, their eyes fixed humbly on the ground, take their allotted seats without a word to any one, not even to the master of the house. All the people kneel as they come in, and remain in the half-kneeling, half-prostrate position customary before members of the thenga.

The abbot of the kyoung then begins the service, longer or shorter according to the capability or inclination of the officiator. Certain formulæ reciting the praises of the Lord Buddha are always chanted; the Tsè-ba theela, the Ten Commandments incumbent on all believers on worship days and on the earnest always, are usually declaimed. Sometimes it ends with this; sometimes, if the abbot is an enthusiast, the law is preached. Then he extends his hands over the collected vessels and consecrates them, and the religious ceremony is over. The yahans rise and file back to their kyoung as solemnly as they came. The presents made to them are carried off at the same time, some by the boy pupils, some by the donors. The people then take away their pots to their houses, and shortly afterwards, at a given signal, the wild clattering on the roofs begins. This lasts till the performers are exhausted. Fortunately that usually occurs within half an hour. If the malignant demon can hold out so long, it is much more than most Europeans can, and their futile remonstrances and threats sometimes add to the general din, especially if, as not unfrequently happens, the disturbance is repeated for several nights.

There is this much, however, to be said in favour of the

custom, that it often actually does stay the spread of cholera—no doubt owing to the diversion of mind produced by banging away on the top of your roof, and the confidence and hope which the operation induces. Moreover, so much damage is done to the house itself that repairs take some time, which also serves to keep the mind occupied.

When the thayè tohp-thee is over, the people return to their houses, where the pots with their consecrated contents are. The yellow string is unwound from the sticks and divided into lengths. Some people hang it all round the eaves of the house in little bags, others tie pieces of it round the left wrist, more especially those who go about much. At a time when there is cholera about, most of the young men may be seen with these wristlets. A Rangoon clerk detected wearing one colours with annoyance, and says his parents made him put it on. He very probably throws it away, but the same night he will have a fresh piece on. The thread is coloured with dye obtained from the wood of the jack-tree, the same which supplies the colouring matter for the monkish garments. The tha-byay bin leaves are kept in the pot, or scattered about the house. The tree is particularly highly esteemed by the Burmese. A species of it, the tha-byoo tha-byay bin (the Malay apple, *Eugenia malaccensis*), is celebrated as the largest tree in the island which lies to the south of Mount Myemmoh. Sprigs and leaves of the tha-byay bin are cut, prayers and supplications for absent friends and relatives offered up before them, and then the twig is thrown into a pot of water. A song has been composed about the tree itself, and is one of the most popular of those that do not belong to the category of love-songs. The jester in a play has always an unfailing "draw" when, wishing to testify his regard for some one, he declares he has cut down an entire tha-byay bin and thrown it into the river that his friend may enjoy good health. The joke lies in the contrast between this and the couple of leaves in a small pot used by people ordinarily.

It might have been expected that contact with English civilisation and doctors would have put an end to the riotous absurdity of the thayè tohp-thee; but it has not by any means. In fact the house-beating goes on more vigorously

in Rangoon and the larger district towns than elsewhere. This is partly because cholera is more frequent there on account of the crowding together of the people, and the greater chances of the water being polluted; and partly because in small villages the people very often simply abandon the place, if there seems any danger of the malady getting a firm hold. Cholera is almost certainly fatal to any Burman attacked. The usual remedy adopted is a very astringent decoction of the rind of the mangosteen fruit, but it is seldom given soon enough to be of any use; and the Burman habit of trying to keep air away from the patient as much as possible, pretty nearly renders useless any effect the drug might have had. All the windows and doors of the house are covered up, and a cloth is usually thrown over the sick man's head, so that he can hardly draw breath. Under these circumstances the man smitten with cholera invariably justifies the national belief that he is doomed. Any means, therefore, of keeping away the epidemic is eagerly seized upon, if it is only the embarkation of the whole population in unlimited gohn-nyin toh playing, as was recently recommended as a favourable diversion to the public mind in Prome. No amount of reasoning or remonstrance is likely to put an end to the infliction of the thayè tohp-thee. The government officials are helpless against the superstition, and English police-inspectors have simply to stand by foolishly with their hands to their ears till the clatter and clamour dies down.

## CHAPTER XLII

### MAKING GOLD

THE Burmese have no more escaped from the craze for the discovery of the philosopher's stone than other civilised peoples. Even at the present day there are numbers of goldsmiths and other handicraftsmen in the principal towns of Lower Burma who might be prosperous and happy, did not the craving for the discovery of a means of making gold perpetually disturb their minds, and impel them to waste their earnings in dabblings with mercury and strange-looking mineral and vegetable products. Mercury is what the experimenter always starts with. Every would-be discoverer commences his researches with mercury; and it is on this account a matter for congratulation that it is so expensive; otherwise, we might have far more people doing damage to themselves and others than is even now the case. The last great fire in Rangoon was caused by a searcher after secrets capsizing his crucible while suddenly pouring in mercury. For greater secrecy, and because his horoscope said it was a favourable time, he was working at three in the morning. His house took fire; and when day dawned the whole of Edward Street — one of the wealthiest inhabited by Burmans—was a heap of smouldering ashes. The originator of the fire, instead of being abused for his carelessness, was condoled with, because he was able to assert that the accident happened at the supreme moment, when he was trembling on the verge of the great discovery that would have made his own and all the neighbouring goldsmiths' fortunes. But accidents of this kind are not of frequent occurrence. The damage is usually limited to burnt

fingers, and constitutions shattered with the red fumes of the heated mercury. Sometimes, however, men who have lost their possessions in attempting to make gold, fall upon the notion of repairing their fortunes by making money—coining as it is called in ordinary parlance. Luckily, few have the skill requisite for this "smashing" business; and the counterfeit coin put about is such as should hardly deceive any man who has ever seen a genuine piece of money before.

Naturally with so many people experimenting, there are always rumours of the discovery having been made. Indeed, methods are known by which the great object can be attained—with proper care and the selection of a favourable hour. One of these is quite infallible, and is so regarded even by those who have tried it many times without success. If there has been any failure it is because of some miscalculation in selecting a lucky moment from the sadah, the horoscope which every one possesses; or because some unavoidable hitch in the operations allowed the propitious hour to pass. That there is any doubt about the feasibility of the process no one dreams of hinting. Have not skilled sayahs exhibited the metal—undoubted gold—which they have made?

This method is as follows. On the slopes of Kyaikhtee-yoh, the hill on which, perched on a gigantic boulder, stands the famed pagoda of that name, grows a peculiar kind of tree, the stem of which is flattened out in a singular way, so that it gets the name of say nga-pè, from a flat flounder-like fish called nga-pè. This tree is cut down, and the trunk is chopped into little pieces, which are then squeezed in as effectual a way as the limited machineries in a Burman's household can do it. The chips are pressed between two stones; or the bullock-cart is passed over them; or the good man of the house puts his teak box on the top of them, and summons the family to sit upon it. Any way, the chips must be well squeezed; many failures are due to remissness in this respect. The chips are next thrown into a long crucible, half filled with mercury, and the mixture is subjected to the heat of a roaring wood fire. By this simple process, the sayahs have obtained pure gold—a little mixed with ashes,

if there has been too much of the say nga-pè, but otherwise pure enough to content the most fastidious assayist. The only time I ever witnessed the operation myself, we were prematurely choked off by the wood smoke and the red fumes of the mercury; and when we went back again towards sunrise, we got nothing but a quantity of very malodorous charred wood. There was a mistake somewhere in conducting the experiment.

There is another method well vouched for, and it is much less trying to the temper and constitution than the other, though perhaps a little more difficult of execution; seeing that a good deal depends upon extraneous help, which is not always available, and then only in special localities. You get a small piece of pala-dohtta, copperas, or green vitriol, and persuade a fish to swallow it. Any kind of fish will not do. You must seek out the nga hkohn-ma, a silvery fish, which grows to the length of about a foot, and is, I believe, known to science as *Barbus sarana*. It is most certain if you introduce the copperas into the living fish, let the creature loose, and catch it again. If you are in a hurry, however, it is sufficient to put the copperas into the dead creature's stomach. When it is taken out again it is quite changed in appearance. I have never been fortunate enough to see the thing done, but sayahs say the change is quite remarkable. This new substance is put into a mass of copper, and either allowed to remain there till the change comes about, or heated in a crucible to accelerate the process. In a successful experiment half the metal should become pure silver, and the other half remain copper, the two being on separate sides of the vessel and not mixed up together. This method, competent alchemists say, is infallible; but somehow it does not seem to enrich them. Perhaps they spend their gains in searching after more lucrative processes. When you can make silver, the desire to make gold is doubtless only intensified.

I will mention only one more method, which was more satisfactory than any while it lasted, but was brought to an abrupt end by the exhaustion of the raw material. A ship was driven on shore near Negrais, the promontory on the south-west coast of Burma, and was broken up in a violent

## CHAPTER XLIII

### SUMPTUARY LAWS AND ETIQUETTE[1]

In Mandalay the sumptuary laws are exceedingly strict and most elaborate in their character. Out of the capital the regulations are equally in force, but never, as a matter of fact, come into action, because the country governors take very good care to replenish their coffers out of the money-bags of every one who may chance to be fortunate in his speculations. Speaking generally, officials are the only rich people; but in no country in the world is the official rank more open to competition, or more subject to the caprice of the king. The last mayor of Mandalay, who was also Governor of the Rafts—that is to say, Lord High Admiral—was not many years ago little better than a slave, and owed his first start in life to a lucky accident. Several others of King Theebaw's most prominent advisers were among his personal attendants before he ascended the throne. There is, therefore, nothing of the caste prejudice of the Hindoos to be found in Burma. Burmans will often declare there is caste, but what is called by that name is nothing more than the arbitrary settlement by the sumptuary laws of what a man may wear and what is forbidden; what language he may use and what must be used to him. Captain Forbes, in his book on Burma, said that these prohibitions extended in native territory to the names which might be given to a man. The term Shway, meaning gold, was, he said, restricted as a name to people of rank. This is certainly a mis-apprehension. It is not so restricted at the present day in

[1] Since the annexation of Upper Burma these sumptuary rules are no longer law, but they are observed by very many good citizens even under British rule.

Mandalay. I am as much Shway Yoe there as in Rangoon; and as far as my knowledge goes, there never was such a rule, even in the times of the haughtiest and most unreasonable monarchs, such as Tharrawaddy and Mintaya Gyee. The appellative is perhaps not so common as in British territory; but as far as the law is concerned, the poor man may call himself and his children Shway as much as he pleases; only he must be very careful how he uses any of the gold he may possess in decorating his person or in adorning his house.

If the regulations do not apply to the name a man may have, they certainly do to the language he may make use of. Oriental forms of speech in self-depreciation are familiar enough. They are universal with all the nations of the East, and even turn up in the democratic West in the petitions of "your humble, obedient servant." The magniloquent and supreme nga, as applied to one's self, is not peculiar to Burma; while hnin, addressed to an inferior, is only a little more contemptuous than the *Er* of the small German courts. The difference between the various ranks is far more distinctly marked than this in the employment of different forms of speech; an entirely special language as applied to the royal blood, and in a scarcely less adulatory way to the members of the Assembly of the Perfect. A man "dies"; a monk "goes back" to the blissful seats whence he came, or to neh'ban; a king "ascends to the village of Nats"; one of the six heavens of happiness, where the passions still reign, and in the contemplation of which Buddhists find consolation for the otherwise dismal forebodings of their faith. The Buddhist religion is thoroughly democratic. A man only is what he is through his actions in past existences. The accumulation of merits must therefore vastly outweigh the demerits in the kan of a king. However badly he may act in his regal existence, he cannot fall below the lowest seat of the dewahs—at least, so official language declares. Similarly, an ordinary man "walks"; a mendicant "stalks," or "strides," or "paces with dignified gait," or whatever may be the English honorific equivalent of the Burmese chŭwa; while a king "makes a royal progress." The latter expression is emphatically correct as far

as personages of the Burmese royal blood are concerned. The descendants of Mahah Thamada never go on their own legs in the open air. If they do not mount an elephant, some official is honoured with the weight of majesty on his back. In the same way, while a humble subject "eats," a pohn-gyee sohn pohn pay-thee "assimilates," or "nourishes his body with the alms of the pious"; and a king demeans himself to nothing less than "ascending to the lordly board." You may "call" or "invite" an ordinary man; to an ascetic you may "suggest an interview"; you would be a reckless man indeed if you sought a formula which in the faintest imaginable way would suggest to the king that you wanted him to come to you. When your visitor departs, if he is on familiar terms, he says, Thwa-mee nŏ, "I say, I'm going," and you politely respond, Thwa-ba, "By all means, go away"; if he stands a little in awe of you, he says, Thwa-daw-mee, "Honoured sir, I take my leave"; on the other hand, when, after a conference with a hŏly brother, you take your departure, you say, "My lord's servant does obeisance" (literally, "kowtows with his forehead"); the king does not give you the chance to say anything; he flings out of the throne and disappears behind a blue curtain, while your eyes are fixed on the ground a couple of feet before you.

And so it goes on through a triple language, which makes Burmese in the palace an unknown tongue to the best foreign scholar. Tales are told of the ludicrous mistakes of men, who to ordinary people could speak Burmese, and therefore imagined they might venture on it with the king. Thus it was with a bluff English manager of one of the numerous mills which the late king built and kept going till he got tired of them. This gentleman, in replying in the affirmative to some remark of the Lord of the Golden Palace, horrified the court by saying hohk-de instead of the prescribed tin-ba payah, "I think with your majesty." The expression to palace ears was much the same as if some one were to say to Her Majesty the Queen of England, "Right you are, old lady."

If the proprieties of language are carefully observed, the regulations as to wearing apparel and ornaments are far more minute, and guarded with the most jealous care. The

almost wretched character of the houses of Upper Burma, as compared with those in the lower territory, is very apparent; but what strikes a stranger even more is the absence of the gay dress which is so pleasant and picturesque in Pegu and the seaboard provinces. There is indeed no law against any one wearing the most brilliant pasoh he can get; but the money is wanting to support the character. A man with a fine waistcloth would be considered to have money at the back of it, and might have to sell his dress to meet the contributions demanded accordingly by the local official. In Lower Burma, every one has a feast-day dress, however poor he may be. He gets the money for it by a week's work, perhaps backed up by a lucky bit of gambling. Then he is at liberty to strut about and do nothing till the clothes get shabby, when he has to bestir himself again. In English territory, too, he may decorate his kilt with any number of representations of the peacock. An Upper Burman would have been promptly put in gaol—he would even have run some risk of being killed outright—if he ventured upon one. Peacocks are for personages of the blood-royal. Most people in independent territory wear no coats at all; but if they do wear coats, they must be of the simplest possible "Chinese cut." Long-tailed teing-mathehns, surcoats and the like, are reserved for officials, with regulations as to buttons, gold or otherwise, and other minutiæ which must severely tax the memory of informers and chamberlains.

As we ascend in the social, or rather the official scale,—for all dignity comes from office, or from a special patent from the king—distinctions thicken. Naturally in the land of the umbrella-bearing chiefs, the huge htees afford a prominent and obvious mode of marking rank. The umbrella is twelve or fifteen feet high, with an expanse of six feet or more across. A poor man has nothing to do with these big umbrellas whatever, unless he be employed to carry one over his master's head. If he owns an umbrella at all, it must be short in the handle and otherwise of Western dimensions. Royal officials about the palace have their umbrellas painted black inside; country people, and those not directly connected with the royal abode, must have the palm-leaf as near the original colour as the varnishing with

wood-oil permits. Some have permission to cover the wide surface with pink or green satin; others, more honoured, may add a fringe, either plain or embroidered. A golden umbrella is given by special grace to the highest woons and the royal princess. A white umbrella belongs to the king alone, and not even the Ehng-shay min, the heir-apparent, when such a person, as occasionally happens, exists, is allowed to use it. Matters are still further complicated by the number of umbrellas. Nine white ones mark the king; the Ehng-shay min has eight golden ones; and the rest of the royal personages numbers corresponding to their achievements, or the regard the king has for them. If they achieve too much, however, and become popular, they die. Distinguished statesmen and generals may have several gold htees, which are duly displayed on all public occasions, and are put up in the house in prominent places. The king's "agent" in Rangoon had only one, which very fairly represented the consideration in which Great Britain was held, and the official rank thought good enough to communicate with the Chief Commissioner. A favourite trick of the king, Noung daw Gyee, was to issue perpetually new edicts as to the length of umbrella handles and the proper measurement of the pasoh. District officials used to make large sums of money in the way of fines in those days, and occasionally themselves fell victims. There was nothing of the kind latterly, unless we may consider the queen Soo-payah Lat's announcement as to the way in which her hair is dressed, being patented as her sole prerogative, an instance of the same nature. Nevertheless, the general distinctions are very tenaciously held by. Innocent, unwitting Englishmen have got themselves into serious trouble in Mandalay by going about carrying silk umbrellas with white covers. The offence is high treason and merits death. None have actually undergone the supreme penalty, but there are a few who have vivid denunciations for the stocks.

The metal, size, and construction of spittoons, betel-boxes, cups, and the like household furniture for different grades are rigidly demarcated, and afford the most minute evidences of the owner's rank and his precedence in that rank. Anklets of gold (chay-gyin) are forbidden to all children but those of the royal family on pain of death. Silk cloth, brocaded with

gold or silver flowers and figures of animals, may be worn by none but the royal blood and such of the woon-kadaws, the minister's wives, as receive a special grace enabling them to use it. Similarly the usage as to jewels and precious stones is very carefully laid down. Very few besides the king and his kinsfolk may wear diamonds. The display of emeralds and rubies is restricted in like manner, and so on with other precious stones less esteemed by Burmans. All rubies above a certain size found in the country are the property of the king, and the hapless digger as a rule gets nothing in return. His head pays the penalty if he listens to the temptings of black merchants from India, and chips it so as to bring it under the royalty size. Ka-dee-ba bee-nat, velvet sandals, are allowed to none but persons of royal blood. The use of hin-tha-pa-dah, a vermilion dye obtained from cinnabar, is very jealously guarded. The kamouk, a great wide-brimmed hat, is an honour eagerly sought after by the lower rank of officials. The institution is not very ancient, and was primarily due to a prophecy that Burma would come to be ruled by a hat-wearing people. To cut out the Englishmen, therefore, the kamouk was invented, and is looked upon as a great distinction, though it makes a Burman look a terrible guy, and is very difficult to wear with the national top-knot. Hundreds more instances might be given of the yazagaing, the sumptuary rules; but the above will probably suffice to exhibit their scope and character.

British Burma subjects delight in nothing so much as in their immunity from these enactments; and perhaps the permission to bury their dead in any way they please is the most popular privilege. In Mandalay, exclusive of the ceremonial at the cremation of a monk, which is identical all over the country, five kinds of funeral were ordained by the yazagaing. First, that of the king; then of any member of the royal family. Even if one of them is executed, he is put in a red velvet bag and committed to the waters of the Irrawaddy. Third in order are the funerals of those who have died in the enjoyment of ministerial office—not always a certain thing, if the recipient does not die shortly after his promotion. Then come the obsequies of thootays, "rich men," people who have got royal edicts conferring that title

on them; and finally the rites of poor people, which are practically no rites at all. They probably would not even be buried were it not for sanitary reasons. But in Lower Burma, on the other hand, the poorest man, if he can borrow the money, may have any honours he pleases for his dead. He may shade the catafalque with golden umbrellas, or white ones for the matter of that; he may hire elephants; he may fire guns, as long as he does not do it in the public thoroughfares; he may have any number of bands of music; he may erect a pagoda over the ashes of the deceased; he may revel in all the honours restricted by the yazagaing to the most privileged dead; and, in consequence, he may suffer in pocket as much as he dares. Further, he may heap up honorifics in his conversation and correspondence to the utmost of his desire and capability; finding infinite gratification in the fact that were he to make use of a single one of them in Mandalay, he would infallibly be lodged in gaol, there to be treated according to the way in which he was able to satisfy the rapacity of his guardians. If yazagaing is unpleasant where it is in operation, the contemplation of it certainly affords an unfailing pleasure to those who are exempt from its provisions.

## CHAPTER XLIV

### WIZARDS, DOCTORS, AND WISE MEN

WIZARDS and witches are very common in Burma. The thing runs in families, and on the Chindwin river in Upper Burma, there is a village, called Kalay Thoung-toht, "the small town at the top of the sandbank," where the entire population is possessed of supernatural power of this kind. They have a king there, and if a person who has been bewitched goes to him and represents that he has been maliginantly and unjustifiably laid under a spell of some unknown person, the wizard king goes through some inverted prayers and ceremonies, and utters an incantation, which forces the bewitcher to his presence. An explanation is then demanded, and if no just cause can be shown, the witch is punished and the afflicted person is freed from his ailment. Many bewitched people who have gone there to be cured have, however, never come back again, and pilgrimages thither are therefore not so common as they might be otherwise, and of course no one, not afflicted, would be reckless enough to go, as it were, into the lion's den.

But there are good witches and bad. There are the sohns, who delight in nothing so much as in killing people, afflicting them with epilepsy, fits, and divers other ailments; and there are the wehzahs, who are good people, and strive to overthrow the machinations of the sohns against the welfare of mankind, while themselves learned in all the knowledge of the mystic art. Wehzah simply means wisdom or knowledge, and the sorcery studied by both classes is the same. Both kinds of wise men are divided into four orders, according to the branch of learning to which

they have applied themselves more particularly. Thus there are—

1. The Pyada wehzah, the mercury wise man.
2. The Than wehzah, the iron wise man.
3. The Say wehzah, the medicine wise man.
4. The Inn wehzah, the wise man learned in cabalistic signs and squares.

The than and inn sorcerers are the most powerful and efficacious in their workings, whether for good or evil, and the others are looked upon more as experimenters and candidates for the higher ranks than as legitimate wizards. To the class of mercury wizards belong all those who make a regular practice of the study of alchemy with a view to the production of gold and silver, and on this subject almost every Burman has some pet notion. The medicine wizards are those who set up as professional doctors on the score of a particular knowledge of herbs and simples. It is a very simple matter starting as a doctor in Burma. All you have to do is to assert that you have acquired a special knowledge, and set to work prescribing the most villainous-tasted and drastic medicines you can think of. As long as an undeniable result one way or the other is produced you are sure of getting a certain amount of reputation.

The than and inn practitioners have a more legitimate title to the name of conjurers or workers in magic. The title of iron wizard is merely typical, and implies that the man has a knowledge of the properties of all natural objects, and is as capable, or more so, of acting the *rôle* of a medical adviser as the professed doctors. The discovery and preparation of the pieces of metal, stones, and what not that are let under the skin of soldiers and dacoits is carried on by them, and this vending of charms is a regular source of income to them. An occasional marvel worked now and then acts as a recommendation and advertisement of their powers. Thus I have seen a hmaw sayah, a kind of generic term applied to all wonder-workers, roll up pieces of gold and silver leaf and thin sheets of copper, and throw them into a bowl of water. They of course sank immediately to the bottom, and then the sayah would make passes with his

hands and mutter an incantation, when the metal would slowly rise to the top and float there. When sceptics were present, this man would suddenly stop the charm he was uttering, and the bits of metal would either remain floating in the middle of the bowl of water or sink down again, according to the part of the spell to which he had reached. How it was done is only known to wizards of his class and sleight-of-hand people perhaps, but to the actual fact of this hkohn tè let pwè, as it is called, numbers of people, Europeans as well as Burmans, can testify. The conjurer is a well-known man near the village of Pantanaw, fifty miles or so west of Rangoon.

But however many miracles the than wehzah may work, he is always exceeded in reputation by the constructor of cabalistic squares and symbols. These are of constant use by every Burman, or rather he gets them interpreted for him by a proficient. The horoscope which every one has drawn up at his birth has numbers of these mystical numbers on it, from which lucky days and dangerous combinations may be learnt. To calculate the more harmful spells the inn sayah should have these data, or at any rate should know the date and hour of the victim's birth. Therefore it is a safe rule never to let a wizard or conjurer see your sadah, or to mention the hour of your birth to any one whom you may suspect of having an ill-will against you, for he might from even that one fact have a most potent charm thrown over you ; for these mystic squares and numbers have most extraordinary virtue. By holding up one of a particular kind for a short time you can set a house on fire. Another inn engraved on a stone will make it float, and such a stone, buried in the skin of a man's body, would prevent him from drowning, unless some other magician destroyed its influence by a more potent spell. If you scratch an inn on a tree or a house, you can make lightning strike it ; another arrangement of the cabalistic words or numbers will preserve it from such a calamity. There is probably not a single Burman, tattooed at all, who has not several inns on different parts of his body. Some of them protect from special ailments ; the most common are those which avert dangers from bullet or sword-cut.

The doings of the wizards therefore enter largely into Burmese domestic life. There is a sohn in the neighbourhood, and all the mischief which happens there is ascribed to him, while the aid of the inn sayahs and others is called in to frustrate his knavish tricks. The sohn is of course unknown, or the people would soon make short work of him. In Upper Burma, among other remnants of trial by ordeal, they still occasionally put a suspected person to the old test. A woman is suspected of being a sohn-ma. Her hands and feet are tied, and she is placed between two boats moored out in the river. A quantity of filth is heaped upon her, and the boats are then drawn away so that she falls into the water. If she swims she is a witch, and is put to death. If, on the contrary, she sinks, it is a proof of her innocence, and the accusers are punished. To prevent her from being drowned, a rope made of green bark is tied round her waist, so that she may be pulled on shore again. The great danger from the witches is that, like the *wehrwolf*, they can assume the appearance of animals, or living people, even of one's own relations. If, however, the apparition is wounded, the same injury will be found on the person of the actual witch. Few people, however, have the courage to attack a nocturnal visitant whom they believe to be a sohn, and prefer propitiation in the shape of refections laid outside the house. In all these points the beliefs and fears coincide with those of other countries, and it is therefore unnecessary to do more than allude to them.

The rudiments of the science are contained in the volumes of the Baydin and a book on astrology and cabalistic science called the Dehtton. These are very imperfect, and individual magic-workers advance far beyond the matter to be found in them. It is said that these books were complete, but that in the time of the Lord Buddha the people, worked on by his vivid preaching, seized on all the magic volumes, together with all weapons and objects for destroying life, and heaping them together, set fire to them. But Dewadat, cousin of Shin Gautama, and always plotting harm against him, snatched several of the sections from the flames, and so a portion of the old science was preserved in the world. This tradition of course shows the attitude of the

monks and the religious towards the students of this sort of learning. Nevertheless, just as every Burman at some time in his life dabbles a little in alchemy, so the baydin sayahs and hmaw sayahs, and the magicians, good and evil, obtain believers and clients.

As the sohns are supposed to afflict people with strange illnesses, the province of the wehzahs becomes very much mixed up with that of the professional doctors. The latter cannot complain, and the general public can see no reason why the one should not be as good a physician as the other, for doctors in Burma take no diploma, and are not required to give proofs of skill in the healing art to any one but themselves. Many of them therefore are the most arrant charlatans, giving medicines according to fancy and in unlimited quantities. On the principle of like to like, prescriptions mainly composed of cayenne, cloves, ginger, and the like, are made up for fever patients, while purgatives are rigidly withheld. If a patient says he is no better five minutes after he has swallowed a dose, something else is tried, and so on, till the wretched victim has a stomach loaded with drugs to the limit of the prescriber's pharmacopœia. These quacks are too often taken as the only representatives of Burmese medical skill, and it is denied that any one in the country has a right to the title of doctor at all. But it is certain that some have really useful and efficacious remedies for ordinary ailments, such as jungle fever, dysentery, and other frequently-met-with diseases, while it is admitted that they are particularly successful in the treatment of sores and ulcers. I knew of a case in Rangoon where varicose ulcers, which had resisted the efforts of the best English doctors in Rangoon and Calcutta, yielded to the simples of a Burmese saythama. He used earth-oil with an infusion of some seed or bark, and speedily effected a cure. The Burmese *materia medica* consists of barks, leaves, flowers, seeds, roots, and a few simple minerals, of which they have an empirical knowledge. They especially deal in pills and powders, which they carry about with them in little phials of bamboo.[1] Liquids are very seldom used. There

[1] These little cylinders are usually gilt and painted bright red, and are always strongly perfumed. It does not so much matter about the materials as at what

are, however, two schools—the daht-sayahs, or dietists, who trust solely to regulating the patient's food according to the derangement of the elements, which is supposed to cause his disease, and eschew drugs; and the behn-daw-sayahs, who rely upon the exhibition of medicines. These last, the druggists, are far more numerous than the dietists. It is a great deal more easy to get a reputation with potent drugs than with a simple regulation of the diet, and accordingly an upstart doctor is always a druggist. The best advisers are those who combine the two systems, but such sensible practitioners are unfortunately few and far between.

Both assert that the human body is composed of four daht, or elements. These are—patawee daht, earth; apaw daht, water; tezaw daht, fire; wayaw daht, air. Akatha, or ether, is sometimes added to these, but the doctors mostly disregard it. Earth constitutes the flesh, bones, hair, intestines, and the like members of a man. Water constitutes the fat, blood, bile, spittle, mucus, etc. Eating, drinking, chewing, and licking come from the fire element. Air produces the six kinds of wind. Any derangement of the equilibrium of these elements makes a man ill, and it is important to know the precise time of a man's birth in order to know in what proportion the daht should be present. Therefore in the case of illness an experienced doctor almost always examines a man's birth certificate before he looks at the sick man himself. Besides the derangement of the elements, diseases may be caused by kan, the influence of the sum of good and bad actions a man has done in past existences. If a man is ill of kan, nothing will cure him but the preponderance of good in his past lives. Again, a man may fall sick through derangement of his seht, or mind; through the influence of the seasons, ootoo; or, lastly, through food, ahahya. These causes, being laid down as the basis of the diagnosis, naturally do not always lead to the best results in the case of affections which are in any way out of the common run. Even in perfectly evident illnesses, however,

time of the moon and under what constellations the ingredients are gathered. Whoever reaches a place within three days of the falling of a thunderbolt and finds meteoric stones, has sufficient to set him up as a doctor at once. The scrapings of the stone, among other things, are the best possible ophthalmic medicine.

such as low fever, two persons in the same house afflicted in the same degree with the same ailment, are treated differently, simply because they were born under the influence of different planets, which have a special control over the effects of ootoo and ahahya, or over the respective relations of fire and water.

The dietists are often particularly absurd in their regulation of the diet from the horoscope. Having ascertained the day on which the patient was born, they will forbid him to eat articles of food whose names commence with any of the letters assigned to that particular day, most especially those which have the same initial letter as the sick man has himself. Thus a man born on Sunday will have to eschew eggs (oo), cocoanuts (ohn-thee), and other edibles whose name commences with a vowel. One whose birthday is Thursday must give up pumpkins (payohn-thee), mangosteens, and gourds (boo-thee), while a Monday's child must refrain from seasoning his curry with ginger (chin-sehn) or garlic (kyet-thohn byoo), and so on through all the other days. It is worthy of note, however, that those born on a Saturday are never forbidden to eat their rice (tamin), nor those on Friday their curry (hin). An attempt to ostracise the staff of life, as curry and rice is to all Orientals, would only result in bad treatment to the too pedantic and precisely logical practitioner.[1]

These vagaries of the dietists are, however, far from universal, and emanate mostly from the manifest quacks of the profession, just as newly-set-up druggists will imagine specially curative properties in every strange and new leaf, or seed, or mineral they come across, and manufacture such extraordinary compounds as the green powder nostrum, which was exhibited to an astonished English M.D. with the information that it contained one hundred and sixty different ingredients and was infallible in its results. No doubt it was.

There is no denying that the excitability and impatience of the people react on the proceedings of the Burmese doctors. Whenever a man falls sick he gets into a feverish

[1] Such affections are called "Monday's sickness," "Tuesday's sickness," and so on. (Taninla, Inga kan keit-thee.)

state of alarm about himself, and probably sends off for several doctors at once. The first one that comes prescribes, say for the liver. If the sick man does not feel better within a quarter of an hour at the outside, the physician is paid his fee of a few annas, sixpence say, and dismissed, and another is called in. Possibly he decides that the constituent of the disturbing element is the blood—the element of water, and not that of earth—and gives a dose accordingly. Should this not be speedily effective, he too gets his sixpence and his *congé*. And so on, as long as the means of the patient or the supply of doctors holds out. One consequence of this system is, that the richer a man is, and the more doctors there are in the neighbourhood, the greater is the probability that he will die ; another equally unsatisfactory result is that the doctors, to maintain a reputation and ensure clients, are obliged to make their medicines as griping in character, as unpleasant in smell, and as nasty to taste as possible. In the large towns in English territory many of the better-class Burmans resort now to English doctors or apothecaries. In Mandalay and the big towns of former independent territory the patient is usually killed off by the variety of drugs given him by different doctors.

But in small towns and country villages the physicians are few, and when the say sayah cannot cure the sick man, he declares that he is possessed by an evil spirit or under a sohn's spell, and calls in the assistance of a witch doctor, a wehzah of any one of the different classes, by preference, of course, an inn wehzah. Then there is a fresh consultation over the birth horoscope, an examination of the charms there may be on the sick man's body, a muttering of prayers and incantations, and finally the baydin sayah agrees that the man is bewitched. Thereupon he ties a rope round the patient's neck, and after chanting a formula with occasional jerks on the line, asks the demon in the victim what he has come for. If any answer is given and an object mentioned, this is taken to be the thing required, and it is placed outside the house in the road and left there all night. It will be gone by that time if it is worth taking (by men or nats). If the evil spirit does not then go out of the man, or if the tugging at the rope brings forth no answer, stronger measures

are resorted to. He is soundly beaten with a stout bamboo, pins are stuck into him, red pepper is forced into his eyes, and the louder he shrieks and groans the better pleased are his friends and relations, for it is the witch, or the nat-soh, that is suffering, and not the sick man at all. If this treatment does not kill or cure him, a final effort is made. A middle-aged woman, sometimes a member of the family, dresses herself up in a fantastic way, and assumes the name of "wife of the evil spirit." A shed is erected for the occasion just outside the house. Music is brought, and the woman begins to dance, slowly at first, and then gradually more and more furiously, until at length she works herself into a regular frenzy or ecstasy. Then it is supposed that the demon has passed out of the sick man into her, and that whatever answers she now gives to questions are the utterances of the demon. Consequently, whatever she directs is implicitly carried out. The instructions usually resolve themselves into offerings to be placed outside for the evil spirit at nightfall. If this fails, then the witch doctors and medicine doctors unite in declaring that the nat is too strong for them, and abandon their patient. Occasionally, if he is of a very strong constitution, he revives after that. Such performances as the above are limited to remote jungle places in British territory nowadays. Thus, however, the provinces of the physician and the necromancer run into one another, and it is difficult to say where science ends and magic begins.

Shampooing is almost always employed in every disease, in addition to the prescriptions of the doctor; and here, at any rate, we have real skill. The shampooers are almost always women, though most men know a little about it too. A professional has a most wonderful knowledge of all the tendons and muscles in the human body, and follows them up with a light pressure of the fingers that affords a relief in the case of rheumatism and stiffness from exhaustion, which is simply incredible to all but those who have experienced it.

In addition to their other work, the hmaw sayahs are very much resorted to for love philtres and potions by both sexes. They have always an answer pat if the prescription fails: it is due to the opposition of the ehng soung nat, the

guardian spirit of the house; or the applicant has made a mistake as to the date of birth of the object of his affection. Knowledge of this latter particular is imperative, and an error of an hour or two makes all the difference in the composition of the potion.

It is unsatisfactory to an intelligent Burman's feelings to think that the man who prescribes for him in a dangerous illness is possibly at the same time mixing cunning draughts for a love-sick maid, or is manufacturing an image of a girl with magical charms and drugs which shall drive the original mad and soothe the vengeful wrath of the rejected suitor. Consequently, a Rangoon Burman, if he falls ill out in the district anywhere, hurries back to town as fast as he can. If he cannot do that, the best thing is to call in a wehzah in preference to an unknown doctor; for while the former will probably confine himself to incantations at first, the dietist will irritate all the gastric juices in your body by prescribing some new variety of food, and banning everything you have been accustomed to; while the druggist will cram you to the throat with cathartics and anthelmintics, with arsenic, fungi from bamboo roots, green vitriol, decoctions of lemon grass, borax, croton seeds, and vegetable soot.

The father of Burmese medical science was the celebrated physician Zaywaka, who once cured a colic which afflicted the Lord Buddha Gautama, by simply giving him three flowers to smell. Upon the petals were strewn some potent powders which restored perfect health in a few hours. To this good medico is to be ascribed the assertion that the diseases which afflict mankind are ninety-six in number. These may vary in their symptoms according to the thirty-five temperaments, the forty-five accidents, the sixteen dangers, and the four elements, but there are no more than ninety-six waydana for all that. Accordingly, a very common beginning to a formal Burmese letter is to say that by your good wishes the writer has been preserved from the ninety-six andayè; the thirty-two kan-chammah, or pieces of bad luck; the twenty-five bayah, dangers from assassins, wild beasts, and the like; and finally from anehtta bala, evils of all kinds, envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness: your regard has kept all these things far from him, may his

aspirations for your welfare be not less efficacious. Therefore it is very essential that even the most empirical doctor should know at least the names of these diseases. The mere sound of them is as good as medicine to a man with a stomach-ache.

Bewitchings, of course, do not count as diseases. Very often when a man has very strong griping pains which no amount of drugs will serve to alleviate, the doctor declares that there is an a-pin in him. Some wizard has introduced a piece of raw flesh into his stomach by means of a spell, and this goes on drawing everything to it till it kills the man. When a sick man is unable to pronounce certain letters the doctors are able to calculate in how many days or hours he will die. Unfortunately, the fulfilment of their prophecies lies very completely in their hands.

Very often images of pagodas and Buddhas may be seen outside a house in the country villages. There is some one sick within, and the pious resort to this expedient to get rid of the malady. This method is called payah tayah, and does not exclude medical advice. The figures are small, and are usually made of pasteboard or clay. A man afflicted with a headache will often hang up pictures of peacocks and hares under his eaves, along with small fans. The peacock represents the sun and the hare the moon, and the indisposition is supposed to result from sun or moonstroke. Sometimes a sayah, when he is called in, will recommend that the patient be moved a little to the eastward or the westward, if his illness arises from kan. Similar to this is the ceremony called yaydaya ya-yee or yaydaya sin. A small coffin with a tiny corpse inside it is manufactured and carried a small distance to the east or the west and there buried. When the a-yoht, the effigy of the patient, has been thus disposed of, he ought to get well. These matters are decided from the sick man's horoscope, which shows from what constellations he is particularly likely to suffer harm.

The witch doctor usually has an elaborate rod called yŭwa-tan, marked all over with cabalistic figures, and often with medicines let into it. The sayah stands before the possessed person and threatens a blow. The witch or spirit in the victim then becomes anxious and pays reverence with clasped hands. It is then forced to relate exactly its name,

place of abode, friends and relations, and so on. The possessing demon is usually a witch, and she acknowledges that she has entered the patient from motives of hatred or revenge. The wise man could now kill the witch with his baydin if he pleased, but is usually persuaded by the relatives of the sick man not to do so. A desire not to spoil his own trade is also not without its argument. So he accepts a number of presents from the patient's family, and is then won over, contenting himself with giving the possessed person a sound thrashing as a remembrance of him and a return for the fees. Then he commands the witch to depart and not come back again. As a conclusion the victim and his relations are enjoined not to pursue the witch any farther. Sometimes, however, they are obstinate, and refuse to rest here. Then, if the affair has happened in native territory, the case is brought before the magistrate, who has the accused tied to a bamboo and thrown into the river along with the accuser, who is served in the same fashion. The one that sinks wins the case, and the loser pays all costs. In English territory the magistrate has the complainants bundled out of court.

If any one doubts the power of the hmaw sayah, he works a miracle to cure them of their scepticism, and prove that he governs all creatures. He gets an empty earthenware jar, covers it with a cloth, and repeats his spells over it. When the cloth is removed, there is smoking-hot rice and roasted fowl in the jar, and those present are allowed to eat as much as they like. If they eat with perfect belief, they will never be hungry again ; but perfect belief is practically never found. Sometimes, however, a demon gets angry at the display of power, and interferes in an officious way. He steals some of the cooked meat out of the jar, and does his best to work a counter-miracle. He never manages to do it, but the ceremony is disturbed by his interference and has to be gone through again. Sometimes the sayah himself indulges in a little pleasantry. The spectators see a beautiful melon so juicy and ripe that their mouths water at the very sight of it ; but when they seize a piece and already feel it between their lips, it vanishes away and they bite their own fingers. Unless they are hopelessly stupid they do not laugh at hmaw sayahs after that.

The following are a few prescriptions for whitlow and bad sores from a Maulmein doctor's books :—

1. The "hand" of a touk-tè, the big trout-spotted lizard, that haunts old trees and the thatch of houses; or, more probably, a bit of the stem of an epiphyte called the touk-tè's hand.
2. Sulphur.
3. The bulb of a white lily.
4. A chilli roasted.
5. Cock's dung.

Mix in equal parts, and stir while heating it, and finally add some earth oil.

Again: Take a sufficient quantity of cock's dung, add to it a small quantity of copperas, pound them well together, and then mix with earth oil and some sessamum oil.

Seven or eight dry seeds of dan-kwè (*cassia fœtida*), well bruised, and then intimately mixed with a little congee (rice water), with "sufficient" earth oil added, also proves a very effective remedy.

The baydin sayah's books are partly written, partly filled, with magic figures and pictures. The squares are all formed in accordance with the ordinary Hindoo law. When the wise man is asked questions, he keeps writing down numbers and characters on his parabaik tablets and rubbing them out, chanting to himself all the time. Sometimes he shakes cowries and seeds together, and when they fall out, decides from their position which of the pictures or rhymes in his book is to be consulted. Each of these gives its own answer, but they are not always as definite in their character as is desirable. The sayah always speaks in the declamatory monotone of the linga.

The following are the names of some of the familiar spirits and their likenesses :—

Oo-padanah Pyoo-dah, a spirit who lives under the earth and protects the husbandman. When he comes above ground he rides on a serpent. The inquiring farmer whose cowrie refers to this picture is most fortunate.

Sadee Wazadat, a wild figure galloping on a horse. This means failure of the attempt.

Sakah Badah, a monkey mounted on a goat. Denotes fertility of mind.

In another picture a crow is represented breaking a vessel full of money with its beak. Close at hand are a man and woman embracing one another. This denotes loss.

A man and his wife represented dancing together signify great gifts to the pagoda.

Another picture, which represents a husband and wife standing together in front of a house, with a horse and cow near it, denotes that the child to whom this picture may refer will be a farmer.

Near the picture of a dog, which one man holds by the tail while another hits it on the head, is written: "When the lot falls here, be not boastful, but humble; avoid pride and assumption, for that will only raise up enemies for you."

The following are some spells:—

Take this amulet (a piece of bone carved rudely square, and with mystic figures on it), put your foot up against a tha-byay tree, and repeat the eetee peethaw (a form of worship in learning which one spends four or five months in the monasteries) thirty-seven times. Then you will be able to turn any given man into a ghost and make him do as you please.

Take the stalk of a betel leaf in your hand. Repeat "Ohn padan roopa wahree thwa ha" seven times, and then throw the stalk at the person. He or she is sure then to listen to what you say.

The following is a charm to cause a dream about your lady-love:—Get an exact likeness of her made. Find out the hour and day on which she was born, her name and exact age. Then having begged permission from the guardian spirit of both the houses (your own and hers), chant as follows: "O Thoorathadee, fairest goddess of flowers, daughter of nats most high, grant most graciously all that I desire of thee: ta-sa ma-chan: without keeping back the least remainder; without withdrawing a single joy: prithee do this without fail, sweet goddess of woodland love." Repeat this seven times before the figure. Then go to sleep.

## CHAPTER XLV

### SLAVES AND OUTCASTS

IT is a work of the greatest possible merit to build a pagoda, and the founder, prefixing Payah-tagah to his signature, for the rest of his life is looked upon as certain to pass into neh'ban on the completion of this, his present existence. Similarly a man acquires great koothoh by repairing portions of one of the old national shrines, putting up a new umbrella on the summit, setting the steps that lead up to the platform in order, or even by simply gilding afresh a few square feet on a feast day. By doing any one of these things a man sets his balance of kan on the right side and gains the good opinion of his neighbours. It is, therefore, not unnatural that all foreigners should be struck with the fact that the regular servitors of the places of worship, those who sweep the platform, carry off dead leaves, broken branches, and litter generally, and keep the place in order, are not only slaves, but are regarded as outcasts with whom the rest of the community will have no dealings and whose society is contaminating. Not only is the original para-gyoon a slave for life, for no one, not even a king, can liberate him or provide a substitute in his place, but his descendants, till the cycle of Shin Gautama's religion shall have come to an end and all the relics shall vanish from the earth, all his children throughout the thousands of years that have to elapse, are fixed and settled slaves of the pagoda from their birth, and any one marrying a pagoda slave, even unwittingly, becomes himself, with all the children he may have had by a previous wife, irremediably a para-gyoon. Why this should be I do not know. Some learned men

may be able to explain it, but I have never come across them, and the vast mass of Burmans share my ignorance. So strict is the dedication that any one who attempts or connives at setting free a pagoda slave is condemned to misery in the lowest hell, awizee. The servitor of the shrine can be employed in no other duty than keeping it in order, and kings and great men are threatened with loss of power and dire destruction if they venture to employ such outcasts as servants, even in the meanest capacity.

Slavery of the familiar form known in semi-civilised countries formerly existed in Upper Burma, but the pagoda slaves are a perfectly distinct body. A person who sells himself, or is sold, by his relation for debt is in a very inferior position doubtless and cannot enjoy any very great privileges. But he can always work his release, and is not thereafter considered as lying under any particular stigma. But the paragyoon are neither more nor less than outcasts. They are looked upon as unclean, and the rest of the community will have no intercourse whatever with them. So much is this the case that in British territory, where they have of course been liberated from their compulsory servitude, they are looked upon with no less aversion than in Upper Burma, and though nominally free and independent, have to travel into districts where they are unknown before they can find employment even of the most menial kind.

It is no explanation of the taint that the original servitors were prisoners taken in war, condemned convicts, or people expressly sentenced to this office on account of hideous crimes. The reverence for the pagoda cannot be exceeded, why then should the care of it and the surrounding buildings be left in the hands of such vile and degraded people? Besides, in the old autocratic days, not entirely vanished yet, it was a common thing for a pious sovereign to set apart certain villages, or a stated number of houses in those villages, for the service of the pagoda, and the victims were selected, quite regardless of personal character, by the village headman from those who were unable to buy themselves off. The cloud, therefore, which hangs over such people in English territory is all the more singular. The feeling came out very strongly in the case of a man with slave blood in him,

who was appointed by the local government to be a magistrate. Subordinates declined to act under him, and resisted all he did; the people were still more demonstrative and petitions flowed in begging that the disgrace might be removed from their district. It was to English minds quite impossible that this should be done, and equally so that he should not receive support in the execution of his duties. The matter was far from being simplified by the natural feelings of resentment, showing itself in undue severity when occasion offered, which filled the victim of the popular clamour, and it was only by the exercise of great tact and patience that the English Deputy Commissioner was able to quiet the people, and after long persuasion gradually to set matters right. But the majority of para-gyoons are far from being so fortunate. Here and there in Rangoon and Maulmein are a few men who have got into business, but it is only by carefully concealing their antecedents, and they live in constant terror that the few who know them will betray their secret and reduce them to ruin. The great bulk of the liberated, however—if they can be called liberated when they never had any direct master—find that the force of public opinion is too much for them and are driven to staying about the old source of their shame to obtain a living; they haunt the pagoda steps and sell offerings to the pious on their way to worship, candles and prayer-flags, incense-sticks, flowers, and fruit. Few of them now resort to their old source of food, the altars, where they used to dispute the ownership of the cold rice and victuals with the crows and the pariah dogs. In Upper Burma the sellers of gold-leaf and ta-gohn-lohn are often respectable, that is to say, free men, but in the low country so great is the fear of being mistaken for a para-gyoon that but very few "good" people will sell their wares on the soung-dan. At the Shway Dagohn, in Rangoon, the vendors are almost without exception of the unclean class.

In King Theebaw's territory the pagoda slaves are still universal at all the greater shrines. As might have been expected, many-pagoda'd Pagahn is their greatest place. Here there is even a king of the para-gyoons, and he enjoys a sorry mockery of state in the use of gold-embroidered sandals, permission to wear jewellery, and the

shade of a gold umbrella when he walks abroad. But a free man meeting him in his grandeur would make no obeisance and would shrink to the other side of the road to avoid contamination. The origin of his sovereignty is told in an old tale which proves the antiquity of the custom and the tenacity with which the dedication is held to. A king of Pagahn—which has not been a capital since the fourteenth century—had suspicions of the loyalty of a tributary sovereign, and invited him to the great and noble city with its towers of gold and silver of which Ser Marco Polo writes. This monarch seems to have had no fears, and came with but a small retinue. Then the Lord of the Golden Palace decreed a great feast, and when all were assembled at the Shway-zee-gohn pagoda, seized his unfortunate vassal by the hair, and holding aloft his sword, dedicated the helpless man with all his followers and their descendants for ever to the service of the great shrine, where lies a cast of the Lord Buddha's jawbone. Hence the petty state of the slave-king and the great crowding of pagoda slaves to his dominions to share his privileges. There is little chance of the class dying out, and if there were its ranks would soon be filled with new dedications. As it is they marry and increase. Besides the para-gyoon, equally among the outcasts are the ta-doung-sa; the executioners, jailers, and lictors in Mandalay; lepers and incurables of all kinds, coffin-makers, and those occupied with dead bodies and the graveyards; all deformed and mutilated persons and the lamaing, or government slaves, tillers of the royal lands. Of these the ta-doung-sa are the nearest in character to the pagoda slaves, and were probably originally intended as a kind of reserve to draw from for a supply of servitors to the temples. They may not engage in any fixed occupation for their support, and are condemned to make their living by begging alone, but a few of them become very rich, for they wander all over the country and occasionally chance upon windfalls, but their wealth is of no use to them, for they can never retire, even in the extremest age. Like the pagoda slaves they have their headquarters in Pagahn, and some of them are vehemently suspected of being run-away para-gyoons from other parts of the country. But the advance

in public estimation is of the slightest possible character. Among the sellers of nan-ta-gohn and other pagoda essentials, at the shrines of Rangoon, Prome, and Pegu, are here and there a few ta-doung-sa, tired of their wandering life; yet, notwithstanding the disgust with which they are regarded, they are never stinted for food.

Lepers and others afflicted with loathsome diseases, deformed and mutilated persons, are regarded more with pity than with aversion, but they are not the less outcasts, and must live in villages by themselves, or with the ta-doung-sa and para-gyoon if indeed they do not scorn to do so. They usually line the pagoda steps on a duty or feast day, and receive abundant alms, every third or fourth worshipper dropping a handful of rice or a copper coin into the basket or platter laid before them. The dislike to maimed people is very singular, and led to curious incidents in the first and second Burmese wars. The wounded men brought into the field hospitals refused to have arms or legs amputated to save their lives, and it is a matter of not unfrequent occurrence even now, in the hospitals, for a man to tear off the bandages wrapped round the stump, that he may not survive his misfortune and become a shame to his family. In Upper Burma the taint, or even the suspicion of leprosy in a family, becomes a fertile source of villainy. If the suspected person or the head of the house be at all well-to-do, heavy sums are extorted by the headman of the place in return for permission to stay on in the village, and sometimes informers make a good thing in demanding hush-money. But no amount of payments could save a man badly affected with the disease from being driven out of the town. In Lower Burma the aversion is equally strong, and unless the leper is a rich man he has to liye in prescribed quarters among the outcasts already mentioned. Equally despised are all those who have anything to do with funerals, either in making the coffin or digging the grave. This occupation in British territory has therefore fallen almost exclusively into the hands of the old para-gyoon, and helps to keep alive the ancient feeling. It must be allowed that the ways of the sandalahs do not in any way tend to conciliate the multitude.

Finally there are the pah-gwet, the let-yah-toung, or theing-gyeing, the constables, jailers, executioners, lictors, found only in Upper Burma, and there mainly in the neighbourhood of the capital. These merit all the obloquy that could be cast on them, but their position of quasi-authority made them more secretly hated than openly flouted. They are never allowed to enter a free man's house, even in the exercise of their office; nor can they go within the walls of the palace stockade, but many a citizen has smarted under the blows of the lictor's theing, when a great man has come round a corner suddenly, and the let-yah-toung has seen a chance for a back-hander with his fasces; and it was far too easy a matter for a man to get into jail in Mandalay to make it a wise proceeding to rail at the pah-gwet. It was an unlovely custom in Upper Burma which made the executioner both constable and jailer, and condemned him to live on his wits. The natural result was that he lived on the prisoners, and extorted the last pice out of his victim with threats of violence, or actual torture. Pah-gwet means a circle on the cheek, and this ring on the face implies that its bearer has been condemned for a capital crime, and is respited to fill his present post. Others have devices descriptive of their offence tattooed on the chest, as loo-that (murderer), thu-kho (thief), da-myah (dacoit or highway robber). An execution in Mandalay was a horrid sight. The "spotted man" danced round his victim, made feints with his sword and burst into fits of wild laughter or yells, to shake the doomed man's nerves. It must be admitted that the spectators were very little better. A skilful blow which just slit the skin and drew blood met with an approving shout. It is consoling to know that the pah-gwet, like the para-gyoon, is buried like carrion when he dies, or perhaps is simply thrown out with the town offal.

How does all this agree with the theory of Buddhism, that there is equality for all, and that the poorest man can raise himself to sublimest heights after death? The king has and exercises the power of life and death over all his people. He rules in the truest sense by divine right, and his subjects are all his slaves. The answer is—it is kan, it is the accumulation of merits or demerits in past existences.

A man is rich, powerful, and great, because aforetime he was pious and good. Therefore now he has a right to govern and look down with contempt on the poor. The poor man must have been a bad man before he entered on this existence. He deserves to be miserable; he knows it himself, and submits fatuously. It is true the tyrant does not do well if he oppresses him, and perhaps may be punished for it in a later existence, and become the slave of him who, now a slave, may hereafter by good works attain the rank of king. But in his present existence the great man has the fullest right to oppress and grind down the poor as much as he chooses. He enjoys the fruits of previous virtues, and since he has perhaps in many existences mortified the flesh and done grievous penance, he has now a right to enjoy himself to the limit of his desires. Moreover, as he has great power and riches, it is always easy for him by much almsgiving and good works to add so much merit to his kan as to outweigh all his sins, and in the end preserve the balance still in his favour. This is, however, very hard for the poor man. His station exposes him to many temptations to sin. He has but very little to give to the behkkoo and to the pagodas. He has perhaps even, in order to save himself from starvation, to shoot deer and game, and catch fish, a mode of living which infallibly dooms him to a few millions of years in hell, whence again he has to work up through the upper three states of punishment before he can enter anew upon existence on earth, there to strive to accumulate hard-earned merit, that he may not incontinently topple back again to nga-yè. In any case the poor man's hope can only be directed to the future. From the seeds sown in past worlds, tares have sprung up in the soil of his present existence, and tares they will remain. The germ of a higher life may be sown, but it will only grow up in a new existence. There is happily one refuge for the man born to poverty and misery. It is always open to him to put on the yellow robe of the Assembly of the Perfect, but to do that he must feel himself strong enough to beat down the fire of passions and remain steadfast to the end, for a loo-twet, a man who has put his hand to the plough and turns back again, exposes himself to infinitely greater danger

towards his next existence than he who has remained throughout in the world. The monastery is a house of refuge not to be lightly sought, and, sad to say, even it is not open to the outcast.

This doctrine of kan also accounts for the equanimity and callousness with which Buddhists view human misery and the taking of human life, notwithstanding the law which forbids the killing of even the smallest insect. They recognise apathetically the working out of inexorable destiny, and watch a man drowning in the river with undisturbed tranquillity, for they are not called upon or even justified in stirring a hand to prevent it. You cannot combat manifest fate.

But the outcast may not in any case enter the monastery, not even as a scholar. Even that last chance is withheld from him. He is the connecting link with the state of animals, the highest state of punishment. He is no better than an animal in thought; he meets with less consideration indeed. Were he bedizened to the eyes with costly silks and priceless jewellery no girl would look at him. His wealth is of no use. He is not allowed to build a pagoda, or even to supply fresh-water pots on a wayside stand. The monk would refuse his alms; the starving free-man beggar would scorn his bounty. I cannot understand why they do not drown themselves.

## CHAPTER XLVI

### FORMING THE NATIONAL CHARACTER

IF the nation which has no history is happy, it is difficult to know what is to be said of the nation which has a very voluminous history, almost all of which is, however, pure romance. The effect on the Burmese of the fond imaginings of the Mahah Yaza-win, the great Chronicle of Kings, is most undesirable. No defeats are recorded in those courtly pages; reverses are charmed into acts of clemency; armies vast as those that people dreamland march through its chapters; its heroes are of the old ballad type; its treasures such as might have been the produce of Aladdin's lamp. The result has been a permanent influence on the national character. Geoffrey of Monmouth's "Chronicle of British Kings" has only left its mark on the national literature, but had the English lived forty degrees nearer the line, they might still be believing in Brut, great-grandson of Æneas, and the unbroken line of kings of whom King Arthur was chief. As it is, the British Mahah Yaza-win only supplied a spring for the poets of all the after time. The Burman Chronicle, on the other hand, has laid the foundation of the national character. Like all hardy, strong-limbed races, the Burmans are naturally proud; but this innate pride has been tenfold increased by the wonderful tales of the national annals. What is a Burman to think when he reads in the history of his country—there is but the one means of learning the past—that the English have only foothold in Burma through the clemency of a gracious king? They might have been crushed as effectually as the first settlers of Negrais Island; they might have been driven forth as easily

as their seventeenth-century ancestors from the factory at Bhamaw, far up the Irrawaddy on the confines of China; but Bah-gyee-daw, the king, said, like the Lord Buddha, "All can take life, but who can give it back?" The Burmese annalist relates: "The kulla byoo, the white strangers from the west, fastened a quarrel upon the Lord of the Golden Palace. They landed at Rangoon, took that place, and Prome, and were permitted to advance as far as Yandabo; for the king, from motives of piety and regard to life, made no effort whatever to oppose them. The strangers had spent vast sums of money on the enterprise; and by the time they reached Yandabo their resources were exhausted; and they were in great distress. They petitioned the king, who, in his clemency and generosity, sent them large sums of money to pay their expenses back, and ordered them out of the country."

By the Treaty of Yandabo, extorted by the fear that the capital would fall into the hands of Sir Archibald Campbell, then thundering at the gates of Ava, the English acquired the provinces of Tenasserim and Arrakan, and deprived the sovereign of two-thirds of his sea-board. The Province of Pegu, which was annexed after the second Burmese war in 1852-53, has never been formally ceded by any treaty. King Mindohn said, "Let them stay there; I cannot turn them out, but I will not be written down as the king that gave up Rangoon." Lord Dalhousie said: "A treaty with a man like that is useless"; and he straightway fixed upon a parallel of latitude as the northern boundary of British Burma, and put up a line of frontier pillars along it without reference to the Burmese Government at all. The Mahah Yaza-win said, in effect: "The foreigner was starving in his own land, and the king bounteously granted him a resting-place in the dismal swamps by the sea." To this day the only approach to a recognition of the British possession of Pegu is an announcement from Mindohn Min, the late king, that "orders had been issued to the governors of districts not to allow the Burmese troops to attack the territories of Meaday and Toung-oo, in which the British Government had placed its garrisons." Well may it be said that Burmese kings submit to accomplished facts, but do not sanction them. Shortly before the storming of Melloon, the King Mintaya Gyee sent

a note to Sir Archibald Campbell representing that "it was contrary to his religious principles and the constitution of the Empire, to make any cession of territory, and he was bound to preserve its integrity."

Naturally, therefore, the up-country Burman thinks that his race is the bravest in all the realms of Zampoodeepa, the island in the south, with all its five hundred surrounding islets. The idea has been little checked by English communications and relations with the Lord of the Golden Palace. Such documents as the following are duly inserted in the Mahah Yaza-win, and lose nothing in the translating. This was sent, in 1695, by Nathaniel Higginson, Governor of Madras, to the King of Ava. "To his Imperial Majesty who blesseth the noble city of Ava with his presence, Emperour of Emperours, and excelling the Kings of the East and the West in glory and honour, the clear firmament of Virtue, the fountain of Justice, the perfection of Wisdom, the lord of Charity and Protector of the Distressed, the first mover in the Sphere of Greatness, president in council, victorious in war; who feareth none and is feared by all; centre of the treasures of the Earth, and of the Sea; Lord Proprietor of Gold and Silver, Rubies, Amber, and all precious Jewels; favoured by Heaven and honoured by all men; whose brightness shines through the World as the light of the Sun, and whose great name will be preserved in perpetual memory."

After this promising exordium the letter goes on: "The fame of so glorious an Emperour, the Lord of power and riches, being spread throughout the whole earth, all nations resort to view the splendour of your greatness, and, with your majesty's subjects, to partake of the blessings which God Almighty hath bestowed upon your kingdom above all others. Your majesty has been pleased to grant your especial favours to the Honourable English Company, whose servant I am; and now send to present before the footstool of your throne a few toys, as an acknowledgment of your majesty's goodness, which I beg your majesty to accept, and to vouchsafe an audience to my servants and a gracious answer to my petition."

He finishes by asking leave to send a factor next monsoon

to reside at Syriam, opposite Rangoon, on the other side of the Pegu river. Edward Fleetwood was the envoy. He had to wait a long time before the gate of the palace stockade was opened; when that was done he had to bow three times to the building; half way across the esplanade he had to bow humbly three times again; then at fifteen yards' distance, and finally had to make the same obeisance to the king.

The answer to the governor, in the name of the ministers, ran as follows:—"In the East, where the sun rises, and in that Oriental part of it which is called Chapudu; the Lord of water and earth, the Emperor of Emperors, against whose imperial majesty if any shall be so foolish as to imagine anything, it shall be happy for them to die and be consumed; the lord of great charity and help of all nations, the great Lord esteemed for happiness; the Lord of all riches, of elephants and horses and all good blessings; the Lord of high-built palaces of gold; the great and most powerful Emperor in this life, the soles of whose feet are gilt and set upon the heads of all people; we his great governor and president here, called Mahah Eggena Tibodis, do make known to the governor, Nathaniel Higginson," and so it goes on in the same strain, concluding with a notification of the presents sent—1500 viss of lac, 2500 viss of tin, 300 viss of ivory, 6 earthen dishes, and 8 lacquered boxes. This was, however, more satisfactory than that which fell to the lot of Ensign Lester in 1757, when he got a concession of Negrais Island and a commercial treaty from the conqueror, Aloung-payah. The gallant envoy received a present of eighteen oranges, two dozen heads of Indian corn, and five cucumbers. Two years later the garrison on the ceded island was massacred. The national annalist gloats over these things.

Here is another petition from the white foreigners:—"Placing above our heads the golden majesty of the mighty lord, the possessor of the mines of rubies, amber, gold, silver, and all kinds of metals; of the lord under whose command are innumerable soldiers, generals, and captains; of the lord who is king of many countries and provinces, and emperor over many rulers and princes, who wait round his throne with the badges of his authority; of the lord who is adorned

with the greatest power, wisdom, knowledge, prudence, foresight, etc.; of the lord who is rich in the possession of elephants and horses, and in particular is the lord of many white elephants; of the lord who is the greatest of kings, the most just and the most religious; the master of life and death; we his slaves, the governor of Bengal, the officers and administrators of the Company, bowing and lowering our heads under the sole of his royal golden feet, do present to him, with the greatest veneration, this our humble petition."

Such documents might have flowed from the chronicler's own pen, and the Burmese historical student, in reading this unbought praise of nations, naturally takes it as honest homage due up to the present day. So exalted an idea had the Court of the military power of the country that in 1810 a minister at Ava told Captain Canning that if proper application had been made to the king, he would have sent an army to Europe and put England in possession of France, and so ended all the troubles of the beginning of the century.

Most envoys sent to the Arbiter of Existence have been treated very cavalierly in the way of interviews; not a few in the old days waited long months without ever seeing the king at all. All, down to Sir Douglas Forsyth, in 1874, have had to go in shoeless, and crouch humbly, in adoring attitudes—the unaccustomed nature of which did not tend to render the position less ridiculous. In other ways they were treated with every indignity. When King Mintaya Gyee heard that Colonel Symes was coming, he went away to Mingohn, to contemplate his gigantic failure at a pagoda there. Thither the colonel had to follow him, congratulating himself on the circumstance that as the king was away from the palace, there would be the less trouble in seeing him. But he found himself vastly mistaken. On arriving at Mingohn he was told to take up his quarters on an island in the middle of the river. On this barren place, shunned by all Burmese as a polluted spot, where bodies were burnt and criminals executed, he had to remain forty days, and during all that time not the slightest notice of him was taken by the court. Finally he was admitted on a kadaw, or "Beg-

Pardon Day," one of those set apart for all inferiors and vassals to come and do homage and worship at the Golden Feet. For long it was the invariable custom to receive representatives of foreign states on these days. Colonel Burney was the first to refuse to be so treated, and he carried his point, though the woon-gyees told the king the reason why he did not come on the appointed kadaw day was because he was sick. The utmost protestations of Symes and Crawford failed to save them from the humiliation. Another favourite method of showing contempt for foreigners and exalting the national dignity was rather curious in its elaborate ingenuity. Foreign missions were provided for by a tax levied on outcasts. The money was only collected when an embassy was expected, and was applied to no other purpose than providing accommodation and food for the members of the mission. The coin was considered too vile to be put to any other use. Delaying the envoy at the gates was an invariable device. Just as he came up to the entrance a band of princes, with their followers, would turn in from a side street, and the luckless representative of England would have to stop and bite his nails till they had all passed in. Colonel Burney was delayed two hours in this way, and even Colonel (now General) Phayre, in 1856, had to wait on his elephant till the Ehng-shay Min and his train filed in before him. Arrived at the palace, all the earlier envoys were made to fall on their knees, and shekho to the central spire of the royal residence. The members of the embassy of 1856 were nearly bullied into taking off their hats to the pyathat. The object was to show them as suppliants at the Golden Feet, honoured by being allowed to view his dwelling, and elevated to the summit of earthly ambition by being admitted to an interview. Symes and Cox paid for their admission in this way. Besides this official bad treatment the plenipotentiaries were victimised with numberless personal insults. Even the Supreme Court on at least one occasion refused to see Cox. He was knocked up long after midnight one night by a clerk who wanted to get a nutmeg-grater to show to the king. The Myo-woon wrote to him to say that as the envoy would not take his advice

he must break off all intercourse, and the English than-thaman would be good enough not to come near his house for the future. Captain Cox had had a fence put up round his house to keep away the inquisitive rabble, at a cost of twenty rupees. One morning when he woke up he found this had been unceremoniously carried away, and that it had been used to enclose a place near the river where the heir-apparent's head might be washed. Finally great pressure was put upon him to take the oath of allegiance to the king; he was to drink the water in which the muskets and lances of the guard had been dipped, and it was expressly stipulated that he should pay for his oath just as any Burman would have to do. Scores of like details might be mentioned with regard to all the other ambassadors and residents. It will be sufficient, however, to mention that one resident not many years ago had a cane flourished over his head by a convict lictor, and that the last *chargé d'affaires* of all was chased by a howling rabble from the Mandalay bazaar to the Residency gates, which were broken in—no great exertion of strength was necessary certainly—all because he had killed a pariah dog that was snapping at his heels.

If the various ayaybaings were treated in this way, non-official Englishmen could not expect great reverence to be paid to them, and it is hardly worth mentioning that in 1881 a Rangoon merchant, yelled at by convict lictors, went down on his knees while one of the leading spirits of the massacres, the Hpoung Woon, went by on his elephant. Little wonder then that the patriotic fictions of the Mahah Yaza-win are believed, and that the perusal of them is all the more greedily indulged in. The settlement of the shoe question, since the "Flight of the Strangers"—the withdrawal of the English Residency in Mandalay—is farther off than ever.

But it is not so much the English that suffer—though occasionally a few of them do get stoned—as the smaller nations and tribes who live around and among the Burmese. It must be acknowledged that the Burman is a sad bully; but the white strangers could reduce him to civility, if to nothing else, very speedily. It is different with other races—some perhaps aboriginal, some invaders of Burma as much as the present ruling sept. The Chins, the Karenns, and,

in some degree, even the warlike if simple Shans, have all suffered in common with weaker nationalities from the cunning and braggadocio of the Burman. The Mahah Yaza-win delights no less in recounting tales of barbaric diplomacy than in heroics about gallant generals who hold quicksilver in their mouths and advance on the quailing foe, leaping eighteen or twenty cubits in the air. For example, the chronicles of Prome relate the well-known world-story of the bullock's hide of ground. A tribe came from the East under the command of an Amazon. She obtained from the aborigines—probably now some of the hill-tribes in Arakan—a grant of as much land as could be enclosed within an ox-hide, and, following the example of Dido, cut the hide into strips. She got into difficulties, however, and would probably have been driven out had she not married a neighbouring king. A stepson of hers founded the ancient town of Thare-kettara (Prome), an event said to have been prophesied by the Buddha Gautama himself, in proof whereof the Shway-san-daw pagoda exists to the present day.

A story of a similar character is told with regard to the Shans. The Burmans had a quarrel with some of these big-boned highlandmen as to the ownership of a tract of fine paddy-land. The Shans were in force, and, as they always are, perfectly prepared to fight about the matter. The Burmese therefore resorted to craft. An old hermit was referred to on the subject. He said that the party which first finished building a pagoda of a certain fixed size should have the disputed territory. So both sides set to work. The Burmese soon found that the sturdy hillmen were distancing them. At night, therefore, the chief had recourse to stratagem. He made a framework of bamboos of the required height, had it covered with cloth, and daubed the cloth with white plaster. When daylight came, and the Shans saw the Burmese shrine complete and perfect, even to the extent of offerings of fruit and candles, their astonishment and dismay were such that they marched off straightway to the hills—ascribing the rapid erection to supernatural assistance, and never dreaming of examining the precocious payah; whereat the Burmese chronicler chuckles with patriotic delight, and

glorifies the wisdom of his countrymen. The same story is told of the foundation of the Arakan empire by the younger of two brothers who came from India.

But it is in the relations with the milder-natured tribes, such as the Karenns and Chins, or the small if warlike septs such as the Kachins, that the Burman most comes up to the truculence of the Mahah Yaza-win. Out of the northern Kachins—bold robber bands, armed with queer, home-made, stockless guns—little is to be gained. They live on the hills, and own nothing but pigs; but they raid on lowland villages, and the Burmans retaliate, and there are periodic seasons of mutual crucifixion. Long ago these clans had the reputation of kindly hospitality, but Burmese tyranny has made most of them dangerous savages. It is different with the Karenns and Chins. The former, a heavy, plethoric people, endure their wrongs with dull indifference, all but the fierce red Karenns, who keep up a perpetual guerilla warfare, after the manner of the Kachins. The Karenns account for their wrongs in the following way. When Yŭwa created the world he took three handfuls of earth and threw them round about him. From one sprang the Burmans, from another the Karenns, and from the third the Kullahs, the foreigners. The Karenns were very talkative and made more noise than all the others, and so the Creator believed that there were too many of them, and he threw another half handful to the Burmans, who thus gained such a supremacy that they soon overcame the Karenns, and have oppressed them ever since.

The Chins, a quiet and harmless race, have been subjected to such long-continued and systematic ill-treatment on the part of the Burmese, that traditions accounting for this oppression actually form a part of the national religion. All mankind, they say, is descended from a woman called Hlee-neu, who laid 101 eggs, from the last laid of which sprang the Chins. Hlee-neu loved the youngest best; but he had gone away, and before she found him again the whole world except bleak mountain-ranges had been partitioned out among her other children. So the Chin first man got the hills, and as compensation was given elephants, horses, cattle, goats, pigs, and fowls. Unfortunately, Hlee-neu appointed

the Burman brother to look after him. The Burman turned out a most wicked and unscrupulous guardian. He pretended to teach him, but only showed the blank side of the slate, so that the poor Chin never learned a single letter. He rubbed the elephant's back with cowhage, so that the Chin's bare legs were so tickled that he refused to have such an unpleasant animal, and gave all the elephants to the Burman. By similar tricks the buffaloes, the horses, and the cattle were obtained. When the Chin mounted to ride on the horse, the Burman's wife got in the way, and was knocked down; and as compensation for the injuries she sustained, and to quiet her clamour, the horse had to be handed over. Then at the Burman's instigation the Chin went to view his buffaloes, clad in fiery-red garments. The buffalo naturally chased him up a tree, and before he could gain the earth again the buffaloes had gone the way of the elephants and horses. Ultimately nothing remained but goats, pigs, and fowls. Even the barren mountains were not left in his undisturbed possession. When the boundaries of the different countries were marked out, the Burman took very good care to mark his with stones and pillars, but he persuaded the Chin that tufts of grass were good enough for him. These were all burned away by the jungle-fires, and then the despoiled Chin had to live wherever the Burman told him. Thus the race has never had a country or town of its own, but wanders about in a nomadic way over the hills of Burma. A more pitiful tale of wrong and oppression it would be difficult to find. The well-known custom the Chin women have of tattooing their faces is an existing proof of this tyranny. They are naturally pretty; and this disfigurement—for they themselves acknowledge it to be such, and are giving it up in British territory—was adopted to prevent the Burmese from carrying them off, as they once did constantly.

The stories of the Mahah Yaza-win fully account for and justify these queer traditions of the national religion of the Chins. But it is not in such minor points that the annalist is seen at his best. It is when he vapours about Chinese and Siamese and Munipuris, who come in armies numbered by hundreds of thousands, with elephants in tens of thousands

and the guardian nats of the nations fight on their respective sides and serve to account for Burmese retreats—then it is that the spirit of the Mahah Yaza-win comes out and streams along in true 'Ercles vein. And except the plays the Burman has no other literature to read. It is not wonderful, therefore, that he has as good an opinion of himself as the "centennial Yankees."

> Breathes there a Yank, so mean, so small,
> Who never says, "Wal now, by Gaul,
> I reckon since old Adam's fall
> There's never growed on this 'ere ball
> A nation so all-fired tall
> As we centennial Yankees."

The writer might well have been a worker on the Great Chronicle of Kings.

## CHAPTER XLVII

### THE LORD OF THE CELESTIAL ELEPHANT AND OF MANY WHITE ELEPHANTS

THE *Royal History of Kings* enumerates altogether 587,000 kings, following one another in regular succession. From Mahah Thamada, the great first ruler of land and of sea, there were 334,569 sovereigns till the time of the most excellent Buddha Gautama. From thence onward, the Mahah Yaza-win carefully records the sequence of the ancestors of the last ruler of the Eastern Land, Theebaw Min. Western chroniclers point out incredulously that the hunter Oung Zaya, who died in 1760, founded the present dynasty under the title of Aloung Payah (commonly written Alompra), and till his rescue of the country from the victorious Peguans, held no more exalted rank than that of headman of his native village. But this scepticism ignores the doctrine of Kan, which provides that none can succeed to the throne of the Arbiter of Existence and Great Lord of Righteousness but those whose merit in previous existences entitles them to it. The king emphatically rules by what is called in the Western kingdoms the right divine. The eldest daughter of the reigning king was always declared ta-bin-deing, she was forbidden to marry till the death of the sovereign. When that occurred, if there were no sons to succeed, there was an interregnum till the ta-bin-deing could find a husband to ascend the throne. This selection was not made by the laws of passion or personal inclination, but was solely decided according to the principles of kan. A royal chariot was harnessed to a fiery steed and driven away from the palace with no one to guide it. The horse roamed

about, suffering no one to enter till he came to the person decided by fate to rule the country, usually some one of the royal lineage, or of some other princely line, who had wandered or been carried off from court. Then the horse waited patiently till the sleeper should wake up; the tales always represent the prince as asleep when the chariot arrives. When he rouses himself he steps into the chariot, and without guidance, the horse forthwith gallops back to the palace and the ta-bin-deing finds a husband and the country a king. Alompra became sovereign, only in a slightly different way, but his descent from Mahah Thamada must be unimpeachable.

Long before he took up arms and won for himself the throne, the soothsayers saw about him signs that betokened his coming dignity. When he slept his arms shone like fire; vultures perched on the houses of his enemies; gorgeous butterflies and gay-plumaged birds and strange animals entered his dwelling; he dug up an ancient image of the Buddha not far from his doorstep; when he came to fight it was manifest that he was favoured even beyond the great men of old. He possessed a sword that flew through the air and cut off heads; his shoes enabled him to clear miles at a stride; his fairy spear could spit a whole line of soldiers at once; his javelin could be hurled to any distance; finally, as a fifth weapon, he had a gun which never missed its mark, and was brought down to him by a thagyah. The possession of these five weapons at once proved his right to the throne and secured his holding it. It is true that some of the omens which signalised his right have appeared in others with very different result. A Karenn min-loung, or embryo king, displayed the same fire-streaming arms, and raised a rebellion since the British occupation of Pegu. He gained a considerable following, and seemed formidable for a time, till the English wise men pointed out that the fiery glow was produced by rubbing phosphorus on his skin. Then all went against him as an impostor, and he very soon vanished into the hill-country. Similarly, in 1858, a poor fisherman at Twantay, a large village not far from Rangoon, dragged up in his net a small image of the Buddha. Such discoveries are always looked upon as an omen of high

destiny, and according to the common superstition, the fisherman believed that he would rise in dignity, restore the Talaing kingdom, and revive religion. He announced the supernatural call in the village bazaar. A few desperate characters joined him, took possession of the town, and issued a proclamation calling upon all the faithful to rally to his standard. But the British civil authorities stepped in and broke up the procession which was going in solemn state to the pagoda to inaugurate and consecrate the fisherman in his new profession. The claimant of royal honours escaped at the time, but was afterwards given up by the villagers. In each of these cases there was deception or misapprehension of the meaning of the omens, but the abundance of the signs in the case of Alompra disposes of the assertion that he was a mere adventurer. He himself thoroughly believed in his high destiny, and talked of it in right royal fashion to Captain Baker, an ambassador sent to him in 1755 by the Honourable East India Company. This gentleman, the commander of an East Indiaman, who, under the instructions of his employers, evidently regarded the great conqueror as little better than a savage, brought him a present of a chest or two of gunpowder, a couple of muskets and carbines, a gilt looking-glass, some red earth in bags, and half a dozen bottles of lavender water (there is no mention of glass beads), and offered Alompra the assistance of the great company. Whereupon his majesty burst into a defiant laugh and replied in the following fashion: "Have I asked, or do I want any assistance to reduce my enemies to subjection? Let none conceive such an opinion! Have I not in three years' time extended my conquests three months' journey in every quarter without the help of cannon or muskets? Nay, I have with bludgeons only, opposed and defeated these Peguans who destroyed the capital of this kingdom, and took the prince prisoner; and a month hence I intend to go with a great force to Dagohn (Rangoon), where I have an army now lying, when I will advance to the walls of Pegu, blockade and starve them out of it, which is the last town I have now to take to complete my conquest, and then I will go in quest of Bourno (the French governor of Syriam, whom he afterwards actually did put to

death). Captain, see this sword; it is now three years since it has been constantly exercised in chastising my enemies; it is indeed almost blunt with use; but it shall be continued to the same till they are utterly dispersed. Do not talk of assistance. I require none. The Peguans I can wipe away as thus (drawing the palm of one hand over the other). See these arms and this thigh (drawing his loose coat-sleeve up to the armpit, and lifting his pasoh, so as to display a bare tattooed leg); amongst a thousand you cannot see my match. I can crush a hundred such as the King of Pegu." (Quoted from Crawford.)

Two years later he talked to Ensign Lester in the same bombastic strain, telling him that he would go to Madras, and that if a nine-pounder shot was to hit him it could do him no harm, with a good deal more to the same effect. He is described at this time, when he was about forty-five years of age, as five feet eleven in height, and of a powerful build, with a long, but not a thin face, the expression not being improved by a number of smallpox pitmarks. He had a broad but very retreating forehead, a characteristic shared by all his descendants, and particularly prominent in the case of King Theebaw.

Alompra, then, was no feeble founder of the present line of successors to the great Mahah Thamada. He certainly had the power to command, and his military successes carried the peacock flag from far away towards Dacca, down to the Siamese capital. Assuredly he was a worthy follower of the great first king, and the Burmese believe firmly in the unbroken character of the succession. Accordingly all the old Indian and Sakyan customs are carefully observed by the Burmese royal family. Such are the marriage with half-sisters, and the consequent preserving unmarried of the king's eldest daughter; the reverence of the three most excellent animals, the peacock of the sun, the hare of the moon, and the kalawaik, the carrying bird of Vishnu, whose eyes like jewels look friendly on the stranger; and the a-beht-theht, the consecration by pouring out of water at the accession. Marriage with half-sisters is only allowed to the king, not to the people at large, or even to the princes of the blood-royal. The throne is painted over with representations of the pea-

cock and the hare, typifying the descent of the king from the solar and lunar races, which is also directly laid claim to in the title, nay-twet buyin, sovereign of the rising sun. Similarly with the titles khattia, implying that he has dominion over the crops, and yaza, because he could instruct men in the laws, a somewhat doubtful ability perhaps in the case of Theebaw Min. The consecration by a-beht-theht is completed in three special ceremonies, as was the case with the Payah-loung chosen to be the first ruler.

1. Yaza-beht, the consecrating of him as king.

2. Manda beht-theht, the solemn marrying him to a queen of royal lineage.

3. Thenga beht-theht, the confirmation or renewal of his engagement to abide by the laws, whereupon full powers for the government and administration of the country are conferred.

The actual coronation ceremony is a mere form nowadays, but is intended to mark the claim of the Lord of the Golden Palace to be the representative of the universal monarch.[1] It consists principally in incantations and sprinkling with holy water from the Ganges, performed by the pohnnas, the Brahmin astrologers; the Burman yahans have nothing whatever to do with it. Besides the pohnnas, only a few of the chief ministers are present. The really national part of the ceremony is the royal progress round the city moat, made seven days after the a-beht-theht. The king leaves the city by the Eastern Gate, the precise moment being notified by a discharge of cannon. He then enters the state barge, a most gorgeously gilt and carved construction, surpassing even the traditional coach of the Lord Mayor of London. This boat is then slowly rowed round the moat, with music clashing all around, and bands of dancers supplying the place of a rejoicing populace. Then when the circuit has been completed, the newly crowned monarch enters again between the guardian ogres of the Eastern Gate, a fresh salvo of artillery announcing the arrival at the palace. The ceremony is simple enough, but Theebaw Min never went through it. In the first days of his reign he was afraid to leave the nan-

[1] The Sekya-waday king, who never makes his appearance during the time allotted to the publication and duration of the religious institutions of a Buddha.

daw, lest conspirators might find the chance too good a one to lose, and later on, a fear that the delayed festival might suggest ideas of previous faint-heartedness came in the way. Consequently, though he was crowned successor to Mahah Thamada as far as the a-beht-theht is concerned, and therefore became the source of the law, the guardian of the welfare of the country, the recipient of the revenues, and the chief administrator of justice, he was no proper successor to the warlike Alompra. Possibly the failure to assume the sturdy spirit of the first of the family may account for the deficiency in some of the attributes derived from the first king, a deficiency which even the most loyal of Upper Burmans is occasionally induced to acknowledge with bated breath.

The first ruler was chosen for his strict adherence to the five fundamental precepts now incumbent on all men, and for his general sanctity. These qualities are inherent in all his successors, though sometimes it is difficult to distinguish them. From them sprang four other laws incumbent on all kings and rulers. These thengaha kingly laws or byammazoyah, are as follows:—

1. Tha-tha mayda, ordaining that he shall not receive more than a tithe of the produce of the country.

2. Pooreetha mayda, ordaining that the king shall engage to pay his servants and army once every six months.

3. Thama-patha, by which the king binds himself to assist his subjects with money, and to receive payment of it within three years, without charging interest.

4. Wahsa-payah, the use of courteous and fitting language, according to the age and position in life of the persons addressed.

It is to be feared that these kindly kingly laws were not found suitable to the conditions of modern society. At any rate they were not very strictly observed by Theebaw Min.

Nevertheless that monarch was very far from being such an unlovely character as most Europeans have been led to believe. It is explicitly denied by many that he drinks at all; it is certain that whatever excesses he may have plunged into in the remorse caused by the massacres of February 1879, he is assuredly not a confirmed drunkard. His worst

fault—I am writing from a Burman point of view—is that he was easy, or call it weak-spirited if you like. It is an open secret that he was not intended to be king. His father, Mindohn Min, had a strong liking for the young yahan, but his intention was that the pious and well-read Nyoung Yan prince, who died a refugee at Barrackpore, near Calcutta, was to be his successor, and if the court or the town had been polled, the choice would have fallen on the same burly, good-natured individual.

It must be understood that, notwithstanding the precautions for the preservation of the pure blood-royal, the system of keeping a princess ta-bin-deing, to be married to the new ruler, it by no means follows that the eldest son of this union, or, indeed, any son by this queen at all, necessarily succeeds to the throne. It is not often that there is a recognised Ehng-shay min, an heir-apparent to the throne, but when there is such a dignitary, he may be the fifth, or the tenth, or the thirtieth son, the only stipulation being that he shall be the child of one of the four chief queens. The nomination rests with the king. A consideration of the gruesome history of the parricide kings, who reigned in one of the countries of the Myissee Madaytha, the middle country, as India is called, each of whom ascended a throne stained with a father's blood, until the horrified populace of Pataliputra revolted and exterminated the whole house; the reading of this bloody chapter in the royal annals may prompt the custom, but it is certain that it is not often that the heir to the throne is recognised. The late king made no sign till his last illness came upon him. Then when it was evident that he could not survive, he named the Nyoung Yan mintha and after him the yellow-robed Theebaw prince. Then palace intrigue began. The Theebaw prince, it was well known, had a passion for the ta-bin-deing, Selin Soo-payah (Selina Sophia as she was called by some of the English residents in Mandalay), and the second of the Soo-payahs, for there were three of them, was equally enamoured of the young Patama Byan. Therefore the queen-mother resolved to gratify all parties, and become herself queen dowager. She opened up communications with the then all-powerful Kin Woon-min-gyee, the Premier as he was usually called. That crafty minister

saw continued power in store for himself if he could get the unsophisticated pyin-sin placed on the throne. Therefore he threw himself into the plot. The princes were summoned by a forged royal order to come before his majesty, bid him farewell, and hear his nomination of a successor. As they came up to the hmaw gaw, the mirror throne room, where the king's body afterwards lay in state, they were seized separately and forthwith hurried off to prison. The Nyoung Yan and his brother, the Nyoung Oke prince, received timely warning, and instead of coming to the palace went straight off for sanctuary to the English Church, whence they afterwards escaped, disguised, to the protection of the British flag in the compound of the British Residency. But though they thus saved their lives, as appeared five months afterwards, when the other princes were done to death, the throne was lost, for Theebaw was left master of the situation, and soon completed his arrangements for securing his position. At first everything went well. It was necessary to retain the support of the Kin Woon-gyee, and that astute minister, acting on the idea that he could easily manage the raw young ex-neophyte, proceeded to draw up a scheme for a constitutional government, the greater part of which was written for him by the late Dr. Clement Williams, the first English Resident in Mandalay, and afterwards an independent trader. This constitution was published with a great flare of trumpets and much talk about the establishment of Western methods, and the raising of Burma to the rank of a first-class Eastern power. The people at large did not perceive any very radical difference, as far as the payment of moneys was concerned, under the new system. Perhaps it would have turned out well if it had lasted. But it was not destined to last.

As soon as the funeral rites of the dead king were over, and Theebaw Min had been sprinkled with the consecrated water by the pohnnas, he proposed to marry "Selina Sophia," and take the younger sister, the Soo-payah Lat, along with her according to agreement. But the ta-bin-deing was not willing. On the contrary, she took the altogether unprecedented step of cutting off her hair and entering a nunnery. The slighted golden monarch was

furious. The two luckless maids of honour of the scornful beauty had their hands chopped off by the "spotted man." What became of the nun herself no one seems to know. Whether she is in her grave or in a jungle convent is a matter which neither her friends nor her enemies will reveal. Theebaw Min at any rate had to be satisfied with the Soo-payah Lat. He very soon found that he had quite enough to do with her. The mother had always been known as strong-minded; the daughter developed an even greater amount of determination, and between them they soon reduced the ruler of the umbrella-bearing chiefs to submission. It had never been their intention that the Kin Woon-gyee should derive the greatest part of advantage from the scheme for enthroning the Theebaw prince, and they gradually worked his majesty into a state of desperation. However meek he might be towards them, he soon became embarrassingly testy with his courtiers, and after a time took to using what was called Tharrawaddy's spear. Kohnboung Min, that fiery descendant of Alompra, in his latter years amused himself with spearing his courtiers with a javelin he always kept by him. This trait, which soon grew into a regular homicidal mania, and led to his being smothered in the end, seemed to have broken out afresh in the young king, and the Rangoon papers began to talk of hereditary insanity. Soon, however, the whole civilised world was to be shocked. The queen mother and the Soo-payah Lat persuaded the king that he would never be safe till the princes were put out of the way. It is said that Theebaw Min at first flatly refused, and then, broken down by daily taunts, pleaded the danger from the British Government. Here, also, however, he was overruled. The queen dowager called in a European (not an Englishman), and asked what would be done if all the imprisoned princes were massacred? He answered there would be a great deal of talk and nothing more. So Theebaw gave in, and said, "Shin-ba say, let them be cleared away"; and seventy of the royal blood, men, women, and children, were murdered in the next three days, and buried within the palace, in a long trench dug for the purpose. The eldest prince, the Mekhaya, a man nearly three times Theebaw's age, and hated for his fierce, proud

demeanour, died shrieking for mercy at the hands of his own slaves, whom he had often tortured. The Thohnsay mintha, equally overbearing in his manner, and a fanatical hater of the English, whom he lost no opportunity of insulting, gained in his death an esteem he had never known while living. With his last breath he hurled defiance and imprecations at the brother whom he had always despised, and prophesied a speedy and bloody end for the "runaway monk." The weakly and gentle-mannered Meingtohn murmured a prayer that the hideous sin of murder might be pardoned to its instigator and perpetrators, and then resigned his neck to the club which sent him to the blissful seats of nat-dewahs. The princesses were subjected to nameless horrors, and the treatment of the children recalled the days when ravaging hordes marched through the land with babes spitted on their pike staffs for standards. The poor old regent of Pegu, governor at Rangoon when the British came in 1852, had his nostrils and gullet crammed with gunpowder, and was thus blown up. But the tale of horrors is not one to enlarge upon. They were conducted by those who became the king's most trusted advisers. All the three days bands of music were playing throughout the palace, and dancers posturing to divert attention from what was going on, and to drown the cries of the victims.

The custom of putting to death all dangerous rivals on the accession of a new king was without doubt almost a recognised thing in Burma whenever there was a new sovereign. Many Burmans defend it warmly, on the plea that it secured the peace of the country. Where there were so many of the royal blood, the appointment of one, possibly among the youngest, to the supreme power, could not but lead to discontent, breaking out into open rebellion when the slighted found themselves strong enough to feel hope of success for a rising. The accession of Mindohn Min was marked by no such atrocities, but he came to the throne under exceptional circumstances. His brother, the Pagahn Min, was deposed because he would do nothing to make peace with the English, then threatening to occupy the capital, which they were so near effecting in the first war of 1826. The deposed king was allowed to live happy with his game-

cocks. The people's idol, the fiery "War Prince," was passed over because he was pledged to fight to the death, and there was an explicit understanding that he, or failing him, his issue, should succeed to the royal honours on the death of King Mindohn. That pious and enlightened monarch was forced on the country by a happy necessity. But it was very different when he died. There was no war to distract the people, and further, there was a multiplicity of candidates. The Convener of the Fifth Great Synod had, during his lifetime, fifty-three recognised wives, besides an indefinite number of handmaidens. By the wives he had altogether one hundred and ten children, forty-eight sons and sixty-two daughters. Of the forty-eight sons only twenty-four were alive at the time of his death, and two of these were detained as political prisoners in India, the Mingohn and Mingohn-deing princes, the originators of the rebellion of 1866, when the "War Prince" was killed, and the king himself had a narrow escape.

There were thus twenty-two possible successors to the Golden Throne. One was a lunatic—the Chabin Mintha, four were little boys under ten years of age, others were disqualified for a variety of reasons, but there remained the Thohnsay, the Mekhaya, the Nyoung Yan, and the Nyoung Oke, all of whom were considered as having certainly greater claims than the actual successor. Theebaw Min wanted to keep them all in prison, and a range of barracks was actually being constructed for their occupation when the massacres occurred. Whatever foreigners may think, all Burmans lay the guilt of the executions at the door of the queen and the queen dowager. When some were killed, prudential motives, as well as a ghoul-like thirst for blood, prompted the murder of all, and this accordingly was carried out. Of all the twenty-four princes, excluding the king, there were left alive but four little boys in sanctuary in Mandalay monasteries, one of them barely five years old, and three refugees in India, one of the four, the Mingohn prince, having died soon after. Of the princesses, thirty-five of whom survived their father, four were killed in the February massacres, and twenty-one kept in confinement in the palace, some of whom have almost certainly died of want

or external violence. The remainder were of too little account to be taken notice of. Thirty-seven queens were alive when the late king died. Thirteen fled when his illness became dangerous, and so extinguished themselves. Twenty-three were kept in underground dungeons, or under close surveillance in the palace; one only, the mother of the Mekhaya, with fourteen of her children and grandchildren, were killed in 1879. This is rather a dismal list, and the shadow of it rested over the royal throne. Whether Theebaw Min was the direct author of the tragedy or not, the stain of the crime and the recollection of it clung to him. After its accomplishment, the king fell more and more under the malign influence of the termagant queen. The Kin Woon-gyee and his constitution were ignominiously bundled out of the palace. The former all-powerful minister became little more than a private citizen, and the vile conductors of the massacres were the chief in authority. With their lotteries and monopolies they very soon brought the country to ruin, had it not been to the blessing of English rule.

Personally, Theebaw Min could not be otherwise than miserable. The harridan queen kept him in most humble subjection. Hitherto every king of Burma had had at least four chief queens, those of the east, west, north, and south palaces, of whom the southern queen was supreme. But Soo-payah Lat persisted in remaining sole controller of the royal heart. Terrible stories are told of the death by lingering torture which proved the portion of maids of honour on whose charms the unhappy king is said to have looked with favour. Such an unusual state of things, such a disgrace as a woman's slave for a king had never befallen any country before. A son was born in the end of 1879, but he died of smallpox in the epidemic of March 1880, and a daughter in the end of the same year compared but badly with King Mindohn's three or four a year.

The king was practically a prisoner within his golden walls. No king of Burma had ever been much in the habit of leaving the palace. Possession of it, with the vast arsenal which it contained, implied the subduing of the entire country. When a monarch went forth to worship at a pagoda or preside at some function, he left the nandaw in charge of

the prince or minister whom he could best trust. But poor Theebaw Min could trust no one, or at any rate believed that this was his state. There are not many Burmans, certainly no low-country Burmans, who would have changed places with him.

# CHAPTER XLVIII

## KING THEEBAW

[The following three chapters remain as they were written in 1880.]

### I.—A PRIVATE INTERVIEW

TIME was, when to get an interview with the Arbiter of Existence was as difficult a matter as to see the Grand Lama, or the Sherif ul Islam of Mecca. When the servants of "the Foreign Woman," Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria, protested in 1879 against the new sovereign's summary settlement of domestic matters, Theebaw swore a royal oath by the sacred hairs of Gautama, by the Lord, the Law and the Assembly, the three precious things, that he would never look on a white man again. For a year the vow was religiously kept, and ambitious "globe-trotters" and prying special correspondents were kept at a distance, and had not even the satisfaction of being admitted within the outer gate of the nandaw. In time, however, the royal coffers got low, and it was thought foolish not to make use of the barbarian merchants, seeking for monopolies and grants of forest land, and able and willing to pay enormous sums for such concessions. His majesty's ministers therefore speedily found means of relieving the great King of Righteousness from his solemn oath. The first principle of the Buddhist faith is charity. How, then, could the Lord of the Rising Sun gain more merit and advance some miles on the noble Eightfold Path better than by conquering his just personal antipathies and allowing awe-stricken foreigners to grovel before the splendour of his effulgence and worship at

his Golden Feet! When once they had experienced that supreme delight, his majesty's ministers might be trusted to see that the wealth of the merchants was made to subserve the royal interests. And so it came to pass that Theebaw first received a few speculators and their friends, and has ended by granting an audience to any European that can get a minister to speak for him. And so the Golden Hairs are forgotten, and the three precious things calmly flouted. Still the royal barbarian is not comfortable at these interviews, and always has a look about him as if he had "stolen the spoons" and thought you knew it.

Securing an interview is not always an easy matter, unless you are a great capitalist, desirous of a grant somewhere. If you merely wish to see his majesty, the process is somewhat difficult. You probably apply first of all to the Chevalier Andreino, Italian Consul in Mandalay, and master of ceremonies and mysterious "doing duty" man at the Burmese Court. He may get you the desired audience, but more probably refers you to one of the higher ministers. Almost certainly these officials will say that it is impossible for you to see the king. His majesty is too busy, "working hard all day at affairs of state"; and they gaze stolidly upon you. You regret the circumstance extremely, make the minister a present of a few hundred rupees, and continue to deplore your bad luck. Then he brightens up suddenly, recollects that on such and such a day his majesty is possibly free. He will find out and do his best for you.

Next day you are told that an interview will be granted, that the king of kings graciously permits you to come and place your head under his gilded feet. If you are a wise man and have been warned by considerate friends, you will now commence to practise sitting on your feet. It is as well to rehearse the process frequently beforehand, for they must be tucked away so that his majesty cannot see them; and if you do not find the most agreeable way of effecting the concealment, your audience will be chiefly memorable to you for frightful agony, a vast amount of internal "popular language," and vows of vengeance against the ministers, who seem to have an irritating faculty of grinning all down their backs.

The journey to the palace is not a pleasant preparation. It is too hot to ride, and accordingly you decide to go in the apotheosis of a dog-kennel on wheels, which does duty for a carriage in Mandalay. There is not room for much more than one Englishman in the vehicle, and the only way you can get in is by scrambling over the backs of the bullocks. I shall never forget my first experience of a Mandalay carriage. After an exciting ten minutes spent in trying to circumvent a kicking bullock, I at length got in and sat down on the floor—there are no seats—to gaze out at the round hole by which I had got in. The rest of the party followed, each man in a kennel of his own. The beasts set off at a swinging trot over roads of the early depraved order, and in a couple of minutes we were all regretting that we did not brave the sun and ride, or even walk. However, the drivers disregard our entreaties, and hustle up the cattle all the more energetically. We pass over the moat, and through the enormous wooden gateway into the walled town. We enter by the a-mingala gate, the south-western, the only one through which corpses are allowed to be taken from the city. It is almost invariably used by Englishmen as being nearest to the Residency and the river, but no upper-class Burman will pass through it if he possibly can avoid doing so. After five minutes' more jolting we arrive at the outer stockade of the palace, and get out of our conveyances with some alacrity and a lot of bruises. Immediately inside the gate is a guard-house, with a cluster of the royal soldiery, who, as we come up, squat down on the ground and hold their Enfields in front of them at the third motion of the present, looking like frogs trying to climb a tree.

We cross a wide open space, pass through the "Red Postern," and turn to the left, for it is to be a private reception, and we do not descend the steps to the Hall of Audience. We pass a gallop which Theebaw has laid down for his ponies, and enter the Royal Gardens. They are not much to speak of. Laid out in squares, with raised paths, deep brickwork canals running in every direction, grottoes and "fads" of all sorts in every available place, they are rather tiresome, and we prefer to talk to a remarkable gentleman who meets us here. This is the Pan-gyet Woon, or governor

of the glass manufactories—rather a mysterious title, seeing that there are no such works in the royal city. But names mean anything or nothing in Mandalay.

A "leary" man is the Pan-gyet Woon. As we shake hands with him he smiles demurely, and says he regrets he cannot offer us "a liquor." "Wine or spirits, you know, are not drunk in the palace," and an apparition suggestive of a barbarian wink flits across his face. We have not long to talk with him, however. Everything, he says, is ready, and we make for a side-door into the palace, or rather into one of the numerous audience chambers connected with the nan-daw, each having a name of its own, and being used according to his majesty's whim. We are to be received in the Hmaw-gaw, "the Crystal Palace," so called from the decoration of its walls, resplendent with bits of looking-glass and zinc. We have to put off our shoes before stepping into the palace, and do so not without dire misgivings, for in times gone by we had been to see King Mindohn, and have lively recollections of the nails in the floor. A Burman, they say, never likes to finish anything, and therefore does not drive home the nails in the planking of his house. People more versed in the ways of the nandaw assert that this is not the true reason, and declare that it is an ingenious method of making the presumptuous kullah approach the neighbourhood of the Lord of Land and Sea in respectful fashion, with his eyes humbly lowered. It certainly is very effective in that way. You cannot gaze about you with any degree of freedom when you have a lurking suspicion that the next step will drive a nail into the ball of your big toe. Consequently every one used to go in with meekly downcast face, and respect to the sovereign was thus triumphantly enforced. But Theebaw disdains such petty ways of compelling outward respect. Has he not made the English Resident run away? Or perhaps it is the European experience of the Pan-gyet Woon that we have to thank. At any rate, the corridors and passages are covered with thick soft carpets, three or four deep, and we walk along in comfort, if with a somewhat undressed feeling.

It is not far to the Hmaw-gaw. We find the chamber almost empty. A thick carpet, woven in one piece, covers

the floor, and the far side is raised a couple of feet above the rest of the room. On this dais stands a couch. The Pan-gyet Woon tells us to sit down and not to speak. We obey, and stare at the couch and a door behind it. Again we have misgivings. Mindohn Min used to keep visitors waiting a trifle of an hour or so, till they got so cramped that they had to be hoisted on to their legs. But it is not so with his son. He comes almost immediately, jerking himself suddenly in at the door, as if somebody had stuck a pin into him behind, walks hurriedly to the couch, kicking off his slippers on the way, and throws himself upon it, with his elbows sunk in the crimson and gold cushions. He looks straight at us for about thirty seconds, and then falls to examining his finger-nails and the carpet. He is embarrassed; his father was embarrassing. The pious potentate used to scrutinise his visitors (at a distance of twenty feet or so) through a field-glass, and people who were not overawed used to grin, which required explanation. King Theebaw comes alone, except that there is a page with cheroots. The gigantic gold spittoon and betel-nut box and other salivating and chewing paraphernalia, which were deposited before his late lamented father, are wanting. He knocks off the ash of his green cheroot on the carpet and presently lets it go out. Meanwhile the than-daw-sin, the royal herald, has commenced chanting our names, business and the list of our presents. This is done in a high-pitched recitative, and takes a long time, for all the names, styles, and titles of his majesty are declaimed for a matter of quarter of an hour, each sentence ending with a long-drawn paya-a-ah.

At last it is over, and Theebaw asks if we are well. We announce that we are, and the interpreter, who throughout "plays it rather low down upon us," says that by his majesty's merciful permission we are in the enjoyment of perfect health. Theebaw then demands our business. The interpreter replies that we have come to view the glories of his majesty's n hty kingdom, and to lay our heads under his golden feet This is a lengthy formality, for an epitome of the titles c in with every answer. Theebaw looks very ill at ease has an occasional glance at us out of

the tail of his eye. Having inquired after the well-being of the Queen, the Viceroy, the Chief Commissioner of British Burma, and his dear brothers in Calcutta, who, he hopes, are being well treated, as befits their rank, it seems as if there was going to be a sudden end to the audience, to avert which we wildly grasp at the idea of saying that we had taken tickets in the royal lotteries, but had not been successful in the drawing. His majesty twirls his cheroot over his shoulder, which is a sign that he wants a light, and says he is very sorry, but hopes we will try again. We announce that we are going to make another attempt, and add, in the desperate hope of getting his majesty into a controversy, that lotteries are considered a very bad thing for the people in Europe. The interpreter gazes for three-quarters of a second reproachfully at us and says, that by reason of his majesty's great might, glory, and clemency, we are encouraged to make a fresh venture, and that we are lost in wonder at the wisdom which has fallen upon such a method of increasing the revenue, a system which had never occurred to the unilluminated minds of barbarian financialists. Burmese is a language with which some of us are acquainted, and which affords unusual facilities for the relief of the irritated mind, but while we are hesitating as to whether we shall break through Court etiquette and address the great Lord of Righteousness mouth to mouth, Theebaw graciously remarks that he is glad to hear that the wisdom of his ministers has increased the knowledge of political economy in the world, and adds that he is unacquainted with any trade which for an outlay of two rupees will bring in a return of ten thousand. Having announced that he will give orders to his bohs and woons to show us every respect while we remain under the shadow of his throne, he suddenly gets up and vanishes as rapidly as he appeared. The Pan-gyet Woon calls out, "Get on your legs, gentlemen, 'long chairs' are better than this sort of thing," and we obey with great alacrity, and are regaled outside with brandy and water of considerable potency, poured out of a teapot into teacups.

# CHAPTER XLIX

## KING THEEBAW

### II.—THE MANY-TITLED

His most glorious, excellent majesty, the present ruler of the city of Mandalay, or Yettana-bohng Nay-pyee-daw, ruler of the sea and land, lord of the rising sun, sovereign of the empires of Thuma-paranta and Zampoo-deepa, and of other great empires and countries, and king of all the umbrella-bearing chiefs, lord of the mines of gold, silver, rubies, amber, and the noble serpentine, chief of the Saddan, or celestial elephant, and master of many white elephants, the supporter of religion, owner of the sekya, or Indra's weapon, the sun-descended monarch, sovereign of the power of life and death, great chief of righteousness, king of kings, and possessor of boundless dominions and supreme wisdom, the arbiter of existence, has a very bad character. He killed his brothers and sisters and he drinks gin.

He is very far from being a fool for all that. All his predecessors killed certain of their relatives too when they came to the throne; only they had not so many as Theebaw, and there were no electric telegraphs in those days. Besides, they had not such pressing need to clear the field. Theebaw was put on the throne by a palace intrigue, and if he had not disposed of his brothers they would probably have killed him. So say all his majesty's subjects, and they ought to know. The drinking of plebeian gin is another matter, and is likely to be the ruin of the many-titled monarch. It is telling on him fast. When he came to the throne he was a very good-looking young man, the hand-

somest Burman in the country, people used to say. Two years and a half have, however, made a very great difference. His majesty's flat nose has become flatter than ever; his eyes have sunk deep into their sockets, like snails in a fright; and his round face is all bloated and blotched. When we had an interview with him, the fair Soo-payah Lat, his majesty's consort, seemed to have been asserting her authority, for he had an extensive scratch, reaching from his eye all over his left cheek, and it did not improve his personal appearance. His majesty on the whole looked rather "hipped" on that occasion. It was a private interview certainly, and we did not therefore expect to see him gorgeous in a silk surcoat and spire-like tharapoo, or crown. But it seemed somewhat negligent to appear in a soiled white short coat and a plain check-pattern, yellow silk pasoh, such as any ordinary townsman might wear. In his ears certainly were splendid gold cylinders, with magnificent clusters of diamonds and emeralds at the ends, and on his finger glistened a sapphire ring worth a monarch's ransom. There was a spray of diamonds in his hair too, but it only sufficed to draw attention to the fact that he wore a good deal of false hair and had been remarkably unsuccessful in concealing the borrowed tresses. All Burmans wear their long hair tied up in a knot on the top of their head. Theebaw, however, stepped out of a monastery on to the throne, and in the monasteries every one has his head shaved. The royal hair has therefore not had time to grow very long yet, and his majesty makes up his young, or top knot, with false tresses, as many humbler Burmans do, only they take care over it, which he does not. This is the worst sign of all; for when a Burman ceases to take pride in his hair he must be very far gone.

There are very considerable doubts as to his majesty's legitimacy. In any case he is not a pure Burman. His mother had a good deal of wild Shan blood in her veins. Just before Theebaw's birth it was discovered that his mother was unpardonably intimate with a pohn-gyee, one of the mendicants of the royal monastery. The monk was thrown into prison, and died there very suddenly of official colic. The queen was sent to a nunnery, where she remained till

Theebaw came to the throne. She had better have stayed there for good. A year ago there was a fearful scandal. Some thirty people about the Court were beheaded, and the queen dowager was relegated to the convent.

Theebaw himself was brought up in an uncle's house, and used to be unmercifully bullied by his cousins. When Dr. Marks, the eminent S.P.G. missionary, came to Mandalay and established a school, the late king asked what was the best age for a Burman to commence learning English. The reverend gentleman said, "About twelve years old." King Mindohn called for "all his sons that were twelve years old or thereabouts." Eleven were produced, and among them was Theebaw. The future king went to the royal school, but he sat apart from his late victims, and never came to school on the same elephant with them. He was a surly, morose boy, not very good at his lessons, and once or twice narrowly escaped the usual result of such conduct. I believe he was never actually birched, but he had several times to stand in the corner. When he left he was able to read a little, but he has forgotten all his English now. He used to be fond of cricket, and slogged away in fairly good pendulum form; but he never would field out, and used unprincely language to any one who bowled him. He was the youngest of the batch by a month or two, and was always quarrelling with his brothers and bullying the wretched slave who attended him and carried his cheroots and betel-nut. But nobody paid much attention to his vagaries then, for he was twentieth or thirtieth son, and the Mekhaya prince, the eldest, might very easily have been his father, or even grandfather.

After he left the S.P.G. Royal School, King Mindohn made him a koyin, a neophant, in the royal monastery. There he seemed to get on better. At any rate when his novitiate was over, he passed with honours as Patama Byan, an examination in the Beetaghat thohn-bohng, the three "baskets" of the Buddhist law, and sundry other volumes of ritual and controversy. This was what first drew the old king's attention to him. Mindohn Min was a very pious old gentleman, and had a particular delight in his title of Convener of the Fifth Great Synod. When therefore young

Theebaw made a score in the Turanian Theological Tripos. his father bored everybody with his talk about the juvenile divine, and was not far off imagining that he was an embryo Budh. Theebaw an avatar of Areemadehya! Bradlaugh in the Salvation Army! Other people knew better even then. Even in those days Theebaw was a disgraceful little rip. The present Queen of the South and sundry other little petticoats came to flirt with him and his companions in the monastery. An ascetic should not even look at a woman, and the old kyoung-poh-goh, the abbot of the royal mendicants, was terribly scandalised, and it is whispered about that he tied the raffish young princeling's hands up to a tree and "spanked" him soundly. Some colour is lent to the report by the fact that Theebaw dismissed the venerable recluse as soon as he ascended the throne. However that may be, the old king heard nothing about it, and went on believing the "Senior Theolog" to be a miracle of piety and learning, and the sacred cocks and hens on Mandalay Hill had double rations for a month in honour of the event. Nevertheless, he did not by any means intend Theebaw to succeed him on the throne. The Nyoung Yan was the man he named. But the mother of the Soo-payah Lat, now Theebaw's queen, took the matter in hand. She knew that Theebaw was deeply in love with her daughter, and thought she could easily manage the moon-struck, Pali-spouting novice. She communicated her views to the Kin Woon-min-gyee, the head of the ministry. The crafty old gentleman was equally deceived, and thought he would have no trouble in leading the verdant recluse as he pleased. The matter was arranged; the elder princes were all seized and thrown into prison before Mindohn Min died. Theebaw humoured the Kin Woon-min-gyee for a short time, and let him formulate a wonderful production which the Turanian Foreign Secretary called a constitution. When the simple quondam mendicant found himself firm on the throne, and when the Nyoung Yan, his great fear, had got away from the British Residency in Mandalay, and was safe in Calcutta, Theebaw threw off the mask. Eighty-six of his blood relations were battered and choked to death, or buried alive. The Kin Woon-gyee's bastard constitution was crumpled up

and chucked over the frontier, and Theebaw stood forth as the most inhuman of a long line of savage despots. The Kin Woon-min-gyee is now practically destitute of all power, and he has come to be very humble to the young innocent whom he fondly thought to mould to his will. More than all, Theebaw has achieved a certain kind of popularity with his subjects. He insulted our representative and blustered at all foreigners, and finally frightened the Indian Government by covert threats into suddenly withdrawing the whole *personnel* of the Residency. Then it was announced by sound of gong all over Burma, British as well as Independent, that the Sovereign of Land and Water, by reason of his great might and glory, had caused the hated English to flee from his sight, and would, in his own good time, carry the great peacock flag to the south, and plant it once more on the shores of the Gulf of Martaban.

It is a great triumph for the shaven-headed bastard mendicant, and it will be remembered about him quite as long as the fiendish cruelty of his massacres. We have certainly not done with Theebaw yet. We cannot go on for ever keeping strong garrisons at Thayet-myo and Toungoo, our frontier stations, where the soldiers have little else to do but die of fever and cholera and heat-apoplexy. Constant scares ruin the trade in Rangoon, and as Lord Ripon says, when we are attacked in our mercantile interests we are wounded in our most irritable point. The abrogation of the monopolies is little better than a sham, and the negotiations for a new treaty are little more sincere. Theebaw will not receive a new Resident in the Royal City, except shoeless and practically lying on his stomach. We can hardly agree to that again. Some day there will come a rupture, and Theebaw's valiant soldiery will kill him and "strike for home," *i.e.* bolt as hard as they can. Then we had better annex the country.

# CHAPTER L

## KING THEEBAW

### III.—A KADAW DAY

"THE princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces were gathered together and fell down and worshipped at what time they heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music."

That is an exact description of the course of proceedings in Mandalay on a kadaw day. The gentlemen of the court and band as aforesaid, in the plain of Dura, must have greatly resembled Theebaw's worshippers, though we should be very sorry to asperse Nebuchadnezzar's name so far as to compare him with the bibulous young monarch of Burma. A kadaw-nay means, literally translated, "a beg-pardon day." On such occasions all the officials and most eminent men in the country have to come to the palace and do homage and worship at the Golden Feet. There may be as many "Beg-pardon Days" during the year as his majesty pleases, but the most regular and best-attended, as well as the most brilliant, are always at the beginning and end of Lent, which extends, roughly speaking, from June to October. The end of Lent is probably the greatest occasion of all, and the audience sometimes, as was the case in 1880, extends over three days.

During Lent, every one is supposed to fast and be pious and improve his mind generally. On the conclusion of such a period, therefore, it is fitting that all loyal subjects should renew their allegiance to the Great Lord of Righteousness,

and prostrate themselves with humble regard at his magnificent feet. The giving of presents or kadaw—no one can go near the king without a present — is represented as a deprecatory offering to avert deserved punishment for offences.

The whole town is *en fête* on such occasions. The Lord Mayor's show, or the transformation scene in a pantomime, which are the stay-at-home Englishman's idea of supreme magnificence, are as nothing compared to the procession round the moat which encircles the city walls. Min-gyees, a-twin-woons, myo-sahs, and officials and vassals with names with which we will not further puzzle the reader; each man accompanied and adorned with his utmost possessions in the way of man, beast, weapons, and raiment, file proudly round preparatory to entering the palace. The description of a prince's order of going may suffice to give an idea of the whole. First come the lictors, prancing along with their fasces and hoarse shoutings, yelling to everybody to clear the way, regardless of the fact that the populace is all down on its knees by the side of the road, shekhoing reverentially. They are about half a dozen in number, and to a short-sighted man like myself, appear to be stark naked. A closer inspection with a glass, however, reveals the fact that they have some regard for decency, if they have little for anything else. Behind them comes the family band, braying, and clashing, and tootling its loudest. Undisturbed by the din, stalk composedly in the rear half a dozen elephants, the first couple splendid tuskers, in complete war-array, with fighting howdahs on their backs, and brilliant housings trailing to the ground; the second pair with ordinary furnishings, and the others with no further encumbrance than the mahout on their backs. As near to these as their syces can persuade them to go, caper a number of led horses, harnessed with gay scarlet saddles, and saddle flaps, with tassels of the same colour sweeping the earth. Immediately in their rear is a bright-hued cloud of retainers, armed with guns, spears, and swords, and many carrying fans of all sorts and sizes. Floating over their head like a great red cloud, is the prince's wide satin-fringed umbrella, or perhaps it may be a gold one, if he enjoys his master's

favour. Then there is a rabble of body-servants, carrying a gold-sheathed sword, a velvet pillow, spittoons, betel-nut boxes, and a variety of other things of uses more or less obvious. Last of all, surrounded by his page body-guard, comes the min-gyee himself, reclining in a wan, a finely-carved litter, borne by many shoulders. Many of the officials are, of course, unable to make such a grand display as this, but every one does his utmost to surpass his fellows in some point or other, and the result is a spectacle which would furnish abundance of valuable notions to a pantomime scenic artist racking his brains for novelties.

All the retinue is left outside when they come to the nandaw and ascend the broad flight of steps flanked by the two great gilded cannon, and approach the yohn-daw, the magnificent Hall of Audience. At stated points they pay lowly reverence to the graceful spire which rises over the throne and marks the centre of the palace, of the town, of Burma, and therefore of the universe. Inside the yohn-daw each man has his special place, according to his rank, Englishmen being ordinarily told off with ministers of the third grade. They sit there and smoke, placidly awaiting events.

The Hall of Audience is a fine building of its kind; a long columned chamber, with gilt and red pillars, and a profusion of ornaments. The walls are made gorgeous with bits of looking-glass, porcelain, fragments of zinc and isinglass, and queer odds and ends fastened on with a resinous gum. This style of ornamentation is peculiarly Burmese, and is really very striking though the materials may not seem promising. The effect of the whole is unique, if a little bewildering. It is like a compound chromotrope out of order. But somehow there is an impression of tawdriness, and the national Burmese carelessness appears through all. Round the tops of the wooden walls runs beautifully carved lattice-work, but some of it has got broken in one place, and at another all the gilding has come off. There are some richly ornamented doors, but hinges have not been available when they were put up, or have been lost since, and the doors hang askew on the frail support of what appear to be two pieces of barrel-hoop nailed on. Nothing more characteristically Burman could be imagined.

The throne stands at the far end of the hall on a kind of raised dais. It diminishes by a gradation of little ledges to mid-height, and then similarly expands, like one dilapidated pyramid thrust down on another. Those of the royal blood sit ordinarily on either side of it, but there are lamentably few of the royal blood nowadays.

Every one is collected now. The scene is such as can be seen nowhere in the world but in Burma, and in Burma only in perfection in the Hall of Audience. A Burmese crowd is always a gay sight, but when all the highest in the land have assembled in the yohn-daw, it is magnificent. The Tennysonian "wind-stirred tulip beds" is a tempting phrase, but it hardly seems sufficient. A stirabout of rainbows has an oriental sound about it, and perhaps more fitly suggests the brilliant contrasts of colour. What a magnificent sight it must be from the throne; the eye passing over the gaily dressed figures, every face bent low to the ground, down the broad steps, and through the towering eastern gate, over spires and pagodas away to the shaggy dark Shan hills beyond, like the entries to King Arthur's palace that

> Open'd from the hall
> At one end one, that gave upon a range
> Of level pavement where the king would pace
> At sunrise, gazing over plain and wood;
> And down from this a lordly stairway sloped
> Till lost in blowing trees and tops of towers.

Little wonder the king of Burma thinks himself a deity.

Meanwhile the collected worshippers smoke cheroots and chew betel, and talk freely. Suddenly a little bell tinkles, and every one is grovelling on his stomach in a second. A purple curtain is drawn aside, and down a long corridor, laid with crimson and gold carpet, the Sovereign of Life and Death comes with a hurried, uneven step. He is in full regal dress, and the broad gold collar of the saluè and the towering jewelled crown on his head, seem to weigh heavily on him as he ascends wearily to the throne. Now comes the presentation of the kadaw. The actual presents are all lying tumbled in a heap somewhere, and his majesty probably never sees them at all. Lists are made out on palm-leaf, scratched on with a sharp-pointed style, and these are

brought up by a than-daw-hkan. The sight is in every way a remarkable one, and quite in keeping with the semi-barbaric character of the surroundings. The herald starts from the eastern gate, about three hundred yards off, and in full view from the hall the whole way. Across the wide open space between the outer and inner stockades, and up between the gilded cannon he comes, with a fantastic, prancing gait, waving the palm-leaves at arm's length, and bowing lowly to the ground at every ten paces. Up the steps and between a long double line of the gorgeously uniformed a-hmoo-dan, and the blue-jacketed marines with the anchor on their spiked helmets, all presenting arms. Throughout the whole ceremony, the courtiers within the hall, at intervals of a minute or less, raise a long-drawn shout of payah—a word expressive of deity. When at last the than-daw-hkan reaches the throne he bows thrice, deposits the palm-leaves reverentially, and lies prone. They are read out in part, or altogether, or not at all, according to his majesty's pleasure. Then he commences to talk. He is much more fluent in a grand audience than he is at a private interview. He asks one minister how the lottery under his charge is filling up; another what news there is from the army now fighting against the Shans: a French engineer is questioned with regard to some works going on in the royal gardens; a governor of a remote province enjoined to be regular in collecting the ngway-daw, the poll tax. His monastic studies have given him command of a copious fund of lofty moral sayings, and these he scatters about freely, and sends away aspirants to the royal favour exultant in the feeling that some golden words have been addressed, if not to them directly, at any rate to some one near them in the row. An audience occasionally lasts a couple of hours, so that Europeans, if they are at all stiff in the joints, are apt to get frightfully cramped, and afford wonderful amusement to malicious old woons by their uneasy attempts to find a more comfortable arrangement of their legs. Such receptions are, therefore, not in favour with Englishmen, except those who may be in the royal service, or who are negotiating for a grant of some kind, and therefore wish to be well with his majesty. The king smokes a gigantic white cheroot

all the time, and chews betel simultaneously, making up the morsel himself very often. An American who interviewed his majesty lately was struck with admiration at the skill with which Theebaw manages to salivate without removing the cheroot from his mouth, but a fastidious Englishman is inclined to think he might wipe his chin afterwards without being accused of superfluous labour. Many of those in the hall smoke also, but the operation cannot be conducted with any great degree of comfort when your nose is close to the nether extremity of the spine of the man in front of you.

Theebaw's apparent affability at these public audiences counteracts the effect of any other habits he may have, not so favourably viewed by Buddhists, and there can be no doubt that he is on the whole more popular than any king of Burma has been since the days of Alompra, the founder of the dynasty. Nevertheless, apart from his dissipated habits, it is very unlikely that he will make old bones. There is too much scheming and plotting going on in Mandalay just now for that. If Theebaw dies a natural death he will be lucky. In the meantime the king rises and disappears behind the purple curtain. The durbar disperses immediately. The worshippers return home rejoicing and damn the king's enemies.

## CHAPTER LI

### THE PALACE

THE palace of Mandalay lies in the centre of the four-square city, like the innermost of a series of Chinese carved boxes. The capital is a city within a city. The greater part of the wide plain from the Irrawaddy to the Shan hills, a space of about five miles broad and as many long, is laid out in wide roads running at right angles to one another, with abundance of houses of all kinds, from the brick house of the Chinaman, with its cumbrous tiles that bend in the rafters, and the white-plastered, flat-roofed habitation of the Mogul or Soorati merchant, to the wood or wicker dwelling of the Burman. They are not very close together, but there is plenty of space, and every house has its patch of garden, or clump of plantain trees, and its wide court where the buffaloes and the ox-cart can be disposed comfortably. But these only form the suburbs. The Myoh, the city proper of Mandalay, is a huge walled square, each face a mile and an eighth long. The mud-mortar built walls are nearly thirty feet high and about three thick, backed with a heavy mass of earth, but though they would be hard to batter down, there are no guns mounted for their defence on the bastions which rise at intervals of about two hundred yards, each surmounted by an open-sided teak pavilion, carved in the usual gabled, joss-house, spire-like fashion. The crest of the parapet is deeply denticulated, with no other apparent advantage than that of ornament. There are twelve gates to the city, three on each side, but only one bridge to each three over the moat, except on the west, where there are two, one opposite the a-min-gala or south-west gate, specially reserved for the

passage of funerals. Outside every gate is a post bearing the name and emblem of the gate, the latter being the signs of the zodiac. Sixty feet, or thereabouts, from the walls, runs all round a deep moat, about fifty yards broad, covered in many places with the lotus plant that the Buddhist loves. Here and there upon it float a number of royal craft, state barges, and despatch boats, some of them richly gilded, with the kalawaik, the crane, carved on the stern, others foundered and lying rotting, with their lofty sterns rising high in the air. Covering each gate is a traverse, or crenelated barbican, of the same construction as the walls. Inside, the streets of the city run parallel to the walls. They are wide and fairly well kept wherever the king is likely to pass, but there is no attempt at metalling. Young trees line the sides, and down most of them run little streams of water. There is no attempt at a drainage system, but the town is essentially clean and airy, the pigs and pariah dogs acting as scavengers, and the constant open spaces ensuring ventilation. Right in the centre is the palace, which has two successive enclosures. The outer is a quarter of a mile square, and consists of a high teak palisade, very massive and compact. Within this is a wide open space laid out as an esplanade, inside of which is a brick wall, edged round a great part of the way by the houses of high ministers and court officials. The outer court has four gates, each presided over by a special commander; the north, or water gate, being only available for the royal barges. Except for members of the palace household, there is only admittance to the inner enclosure by the gate on the eastern face. There is a special portal in the centre here, opened only for the king, and none but the Lord of the Golden Throne may use it. All else must enter by the taga-nee, the red postern, a cramped little gateway, which makes the smallest man involuntarily bend his head as he approaches the golden palace. The front of the building is decorated with gilding and tinsel work, which looks well when it is new, but after the rainy seasons would be better not there at all. To the right is the Hloht-daw, the Hall of the Supreme Council, a detached structure, raised some feet off the ground, and perfectly open; the roof, richly carved with flowers and figures, and adorned with the usual

flamboyant pinnacles, supported on massive teak pillars, painted vermilion colour at the base, and gilt higher up. Straight ahead is the great Hall of Audience, a colonnade, or columned arcade, extending along the entire eastern front, and opening directly upon it. At the end of a pillared vista stands the throne, on a dais, reached by five steps from the level of the hall. The top is a cushioned ledge, like the box in a theatre. Just over the throne, and in the centre of the palace, which is the centre of the city, which is the centre of Burma, which is the Turanian "hub" of the world, rises the seven-roofed spire, emblematic of royalty and religion. The princes of the highest rank sit in front to the right of the throne; those of the blood-royal, but not so closely connected, to the left. Then in regular gradation, opposite one another, the woon-gyees, a-twin-woons, woon-douks, and the minor officials. On either side of the hall of audience are a number of minor throne-rooms, not rooms in the English sense of the word, but simply open roofed spaces, separated from each other by skirtings of planking, covered with gold-leaf, and supported by a multitude of teak pillars, dyed for the greater part of their height a deep red. Some rooms are almost entirely gilt, others are adorned with wall-paintings, others, again, with the favourite mosaic of bits of looking-glass, and zinc covered by a gilt network. Every room is furnished with one or more stands of arms; there is a rack of sadly ill-cared-for muskets round the throne itself. The palace is, in fact, a gigantic armoury. All the cannon and guns in the country are kept there. Hence it is that when the palace is taken by a usurper, the country is conquered. The abundance of gold-leaf ought to make the effect splendid, but the quantity of alloy there is in the gilding makes it speedily lose its glitter, and the general impression is that of dinginess, if not indeed of actual slip-shod tawdriness. But to be seen at its best the palace should be visited on a great beg-pardon day, when the rough plank floors are covered with gorgeous rugs and carpets, and the halls are filled with officials dressed in all the hues of the rainbow.

There are a variety of matters to be carefully observed by all who enter, or have anything to do with the palace. Best known is the regulation with regard to the wearing of

shoes. Burmans must remove them as soon as they enter the palace enclosure, just as they would on going inside of the parawoon of a pagoda or a monastery. Englishmen and white foreigners generally are required to take off their boots whenever they begin to ascend a step—the whole palace and all the buildings near it being on a brick platform some ten feet or more above the level of the ground. There are always a number of dancers and jugglers and loiterers about the royal buildings, and the necessity of being separated from your shoes sometimes leads to the loss of them altogether. It is on record that a British Resident incurred this misfortune, and had to make the best of his way, partly in a pair of Burman sandals, and partly on his stocking soles —as being preferable—to the outside of the teak stockade where his pony was waiting for him.

Another ceremony is that of shekhoing to the spire, the external emblem of the throne. All Burmans must do this at each of the gates, at the foot of the steps, and at intervals in between, according to loyalty, or the supposed friendly or hostile attitude of lookers-on. All the early English ambassadors had to conform to this regulation, notably Cox and Baker, who dropped down on his knees. After an intermediate stage of taking off their hats, permission was gained to dispense with everything but the removal of shoes and sword. But the court rejoices in the fact that no one can pass through the red postern without bending his head, regulations or no regulations.

No arms whatever can be taken into the palace, not even —perhaps I should say, least even, in view of conspiracies— by the royal princes. Similarly, all umbrellas must be left at the outer gate of the palace, except by members of the royal household, who may carry them to the foot of the steps of the audience hall. Common people must lower them when they pass any of the gates outside. Arrest, or rough handling by the guards, would be the infallible result of non-compliance. Another rule is that you must take no money out of the palace. You may take in as much as you please.

No one in the palace, or indeed in the whole town, must sleep otherwise than with his feet turned outwards from the

spire. To show the soles of the feet to the throne is high treason. This is awkward for the inhabitants of some quarters, for there is a rule applying to all Buddhists, that they must not place their feet towards the east, where the sun rises and whence the next Buddha, Areemadehya, will come, nor to the west, where the bawdee bin stands, or stood, the tree under which Shin Gautama attained the supreme wisdom. The superstition is probably derived from the Brahmins, who threaten grievous dangers to the man who places his feet on the shadow of a dewah, a king, a teacher, a saint, or another man's wife.

The frequent change of locality of the palace, and therefore of the capital, is a peculiarity of Burma. There are about a score of towns in the country which have been at one time or other the metropolis. Such are Tagoung, Old Pagahn, and Mohtshoboh, above Mandalay; Prome (under the title Thare Kettara), Pagahn, Sagaing, Ava, and Amarapura, below it. The last two are the best known; indeed some people to the present day persist in talking of the "Kingdom of Ava," though that once brilliant capital has been little better than a jungle for more than thirty years, and the lines of the old walls can only be traced with difficulty.

It is hardly correct to say, as most writers on Burma have hitherto done, that with a new king there should be a new capital. This has very frequently been the case, but the matter does not altogether depend upon the accession of a new sovereign. It is brought about by a very much more gruesome (the word is used advisedly) circumstance. On the foundation of a new capital, there are always a certain number of people buried alive. The idea is that they become nat-thehn, that their spirits haunt the place where they were put to death, and attack all persons approaching with malevolent intentions. The notion is entirely due to the royal astrologers, the Brahmin pohnnas, and as being repugnant to the tenets of Buddhism, is strenuously denounced by the true brethren of the yellow robe. But it fits in very well with the popular superstition regarding the existence of spirits, and has hence always firmly maintained its ground. It is a matter of common knowledge that this idea of

sanctifying a building with human sacrifices is a notion which has prevailed in all parts of the world at different times, and instances of horrors of the kind are not unknown in Europe.

The virtue of the sacrifices only lasts a certain time, and when it is gone a new city should be built. There are certain signs, added to public disasters, which point out to the initiated when this alteration of site should take place. Mandalay was commenced in 1858, and two years later the seat of government was transferred from Amarapura, some five or six miles down the river. When the foundations of the city wall were laid, fifty-two persons of both sexes, and of various age and rank, were consigned to a living tomb. Three were buried under each of the twelve city gates, one at each of the four corners, one under each of the palace gates, and at the corners of the timber stockade, and four under the throne itself. The selection had to be made with care, for the victims were required to be representative people, born on special days of the week, and the boys buried were not to have any tattoo marks on them, the girls not to have their ears bored. When it was known that the troops were making the collection, no one was to be seen about the streets, except in great bands in the middle of the day. The government gave a series of magnificent dramatic performances, but no one went to see them. Eventually, however, the tale was made up, and the building went on apace. Along with the four human beings buried at the corners of the city were placed four jars full of oil, carefully covered over and protected from any damage that might come from the weight of earth pressing down upon them. These were examined every seven years by the royal astrologers, and as long as they remained intact the town was considered safe.

At the third examination in 1880, however, it was found that the oil in two of the jars was either completely dried up or had leaked out. One was pretty far gone, and the fourth alone remained in a tolerably satisfactory state. At this very time, the January and February of 1880, a terrible scourge of smallpox was decimating the town, and two of the royal house, King Theebaw's infant son, his only child,

## CHAPTER LII

### THE LORD WHITE ELEPHANT

THE importance attached to the possession of a white elephant is traceable to the Buddhist system. The form in which Gautama Buddha entered the womb of Queen Maya to be born upon earth for the last time to "teach the Law and give the millions peace" was that of a white elephant. The Saddan, or celestial elephant, was an avatar of his many existences previously. The Saddan is gifted with special endowments, and is one of the seven precious things the possession of which marks the Sekyawaday, the Mahah Chakra Vartti Rajah, "the great wheel-turning king," the holy and universal sovereign—a ruler who appears once in a cycle, at the time when the waxing and waning term of human life has reached its maximum of an athinkaya (a huge period represented by a unit and 164 cyphers) in duration. Thus the possession of an undoubted white elephant stands as a sign and symbol of universal sovereignty; and every Burmese king longs for the capture of such a treasure during his reign as a token that his legitimate royalty is recognised by the unseen powers. The great river of Burma, the Irrawaddy, is named from Airawata, the elephant of Indra, a sufficient assertion of the proper dwelling-place of all his successors. Hence the reverence of the Hindoos for the animal, and their not infrequent pilgrimages to Mandalay to see the royal animal and have a dursun, or interview of worship, with him.

All the elephants in the country, whether wild or tame, belong to the king: whoever captures one must give him up to the king, and he grants permission to the princes and to

a few of the higher dignitaries to use them. The lucky discoverer of a white elephant is made a min-gyee, and is exempted from taxes and burdens of every kind for the rest of his life. Red and spotted elephants are also held in great esteem.

White crows, rats, mice, and hares are common and easily distinguished; but it is different with a white elephant. He is not to be considered as snow-white: very far from it. All the white elephants now existing in Siam and Burma are of a light mouse colour, somewhat of the same tint as the pale freckles to be found on the trunk of almost every ordinary elephant. This light grey is uniform all over, the spots on the trunk being white. The depth of the colour, however, varies greatly; and there are often blemishes in the shape of darker patches which would seem to ruin an otherwise eligible candidate's claims. It has been therefore found necessary to determine some infallible test points, which will demonstrate the right of the animal to his title. Determining white elephants is quite a science, and there is a very considerable literature on the subject. The Burmese skilled men fix upon two of these tests as superior to all others. One is that the elephant shall have five toe-nails on his hind feet instead of four. This is a good way of making certain, but occasionally there are indubitably black elephants which have the sacred number of toes. These are white elephants debased by sin, labouring under the evil kan of previous existences, and therefore ineligible for the honours accorded to the real animal. The other test is considered perfectly decisive, no matter what the precise tint of the skin may be. It is this: if you pour water upon a "white" elephant he turns red, while a black elephant only becomes blacker than ever. This is the final test always resorted to in Mandalay. A swarthy specimen who had twenty toe-nails and turned red when he was washed would be forthwith installed in all the honours and emoluments of the Sin-pyoo-daw, no matter what scoffers might say about his colour. Such a creature is the present Lord White Elephant in Mandalay. He would not be recognised as an albino by any except those who are learned in the science and well versed in the voluminous and puzzling minutiæ of the question.

To most people he would seem an impostor, for his colour is a mixture of light-brown and dingy, smoke-smirched cream colour. The eye, when you know it, is perhaps the best rough test for an amateur. The iris ought to be yellow, with a reddish outer annulus. The effect of this is decisive to the connoisseur, if only sinister to the outsider. But the red ring represents the circle of the nine precious gems. In other respects the Sin-pyoo-daw is not attractive in appearance; he is very big, but, notwithstanding the care taken of him, he is remarkably lean and hollow-sided. His tusks, however, are magnificent—white, smooth, and curving forward in front of his trunk so that they almost meet. In his young days he was suckled by women, who stood in a long row outside his palace, and the honour was eagerly sought after, for the creature is a national pride and not merely a royal monopoly. A hundred soldiers guard his palace, and the Sovereign of the Golden Throne himself makes offerings and pays him reverence. An establishment of thirty men waits on him, and among them is a Minister of State who manages his affairs and looks after the revenues of the province that is assigned to him to "eat." His palace stands within the inner stockade and is decorated with the royal pya-that. Every day he is bathed with scented sandal water, and all his vessels and utensils are made of gold. Troupes of the palace *coryphées* dance for his pleasure, and there are choruses of sweet-voiced singers to lull him to sleep.

Nevertheless his lordship is very bad-tempered, and his attendants are much afraid of him. Such things are, however, not unknown with human kings. On one occasion the Sin-pyoo-daw killed a man who had ventured too near, and there was a good deal of trouble and noise before the body could be got away from him. The king—Theebaw's father—heard the commotion, and inquired what was the matter. When he was told, he expressed great concern and not a little alarm for the future state of the Lord White Elephant, with the red stain of murder on him, blotting out hosts of previous good deeds. But the elephant's minister calmed his mind and restored him to equanimity by saying, "Pray do not be disturbed, payah; loo ma hoh' boo, kullah—it was not a man, only a foreigner."

Probably because he is so vicious, the present Lord White Elephant has never been ridden, as previous incumbents were. No one but the king himself could do so; and latterly King Mindohn became very fat and feeble, while King Theebaw's nerves are not strong enough. The Sin-pyoo-daw is king of elephants, and therefore none but a king may mount him. His royal trappings are kept in his palace, and are very magnificent. Draperies of silk and bands of rich red cloth run from the head-stall to the back and thence to the tail, hanging in curves over the body. They are richly embroidered in gold and studded with rubies and emeralds. On the forehead is a plate of gold, recording his majesty's titles, such as is worn by every man of rank in the country up to the Arbiter of Existence himself. Bosses of pure gold and clusters of precious stones cover the head-stall, and golden tassels hang down over the ears. When he goes forth to take the air, he is shaded by golden and white umbrellas. He and the king share all the white umbrellas in the country between them. The king of men has nine; the king of elephants two, but he has also four golden ones. Not even the heir-apparent, if there were one, has a right to use the white umbrella. He must be contented with his eight golden shades; the display of a white one would be regarded as a declaration of rebellion, and would result in his immediate execution. No wonder, then, that the attendants and visitors take off their shoes when they enter the Sin-pyoo-daw's palace, and that the people bow down low and do humble obeisance when he passes through the streets. These are swept and sprinkled with water for him as for the King of the Golden Throne himself.

The Lord White Elephant's suite account for his irritable temper by the bad treatment which he met with in his early days. The royal coffers were low, and the English were clamouring for the last instalments of the Yandabo indemnity money. So the rents of the elephant were appropriated to pay off the troublesome foreigners. Every care was taken to soften the indignity. The king himself wrote a long address on a palm-leaf, requesting the Lord White Elephant not to take it amiss that his revenues were devoted to the payment of the barbarians. In any case he should not suffer, for the

whole sum would be refunded in two months' time. The circumstance, however, seems to have preyed on his mind, for the bodyguard say that his majesty (the elephant) has never been the same since.

There are frequent reports of the capture of white elephants, and special questing parties are sent out every now and then. But the candidates almost invariably fail to satisfy the water test, or the tail is not long enough, or the position of the eye is wrong, and the red ring is wanting. At any rate, genuine "white" elephants are very seldom found. As with the king, when the Sin-pyoo-daw is dead it is not permissible to say so in as many rude words. It must be whispered that his majesty has "departed" or "disappeared." He gets a royal funeral.

## CHAPTER LIII

### MINISTERS OF STATE

WHEN Mindohn Min heard in 1874 that the elections had gone against the ministry, and that Disraeli was to be Premier, he sighed, and said: "Then poor Ga-la-sa-tong (Gladstone) is in prison, I suppose. I am sorry for him. I don't think he was a bad fellow, and I gave him the Fifteen-string Saluè (the Burmese Order of Knighthood) a year or two ago." That is the Burmese notion of how to settle the Opposition. The lines of statesmen in the Royal City of Gems are not cast in pleasant places. If they rise rapidly, they come down with as much precipitation; and their fall is as crushing as ordinarily it is inevitable. The coolie of to-day may be the minister of to-morrow; and a month hence he may be spread-eagled in the court of the palace, with a vertical sun beating down upon him and huge stones piled on his chest and stomach. Or he may be treated even more summarily than this. When King Tharrawaddy succeeded, he made Bah-gyee-daw's ministers work as slaves on the roads for a time, and when this exercise had quite worn them out, charitably put them to death, without the frightful barbarities which characterised his treatment of the upstart queen dowager and her quondam all-powerful brother Min-thah-gyee. A more recent example is that of the Nain-gan-gya Woon-douk. This unfortunate statesman was sent in 1880 as an ambassador to the English Raj, and after eight months' stay on board of a steamer at Thayetmyo, a few miles inside the British frontier, came back to say that his mission had failed, and that in fact he had been told to go away. He did not survive long. It was a week or two

before he was admitted to see the king; and when he did see him the meeting was unpleasant. Next day the portly woon-douk "died of apoplexy."

Sudden deaths were not at all uncommon in the late king's reign. An official displeased him in some way, and Mindohn Min said emphatically, "I don't want to see that man any more." The poor wretch left the royal presence to be seized by lictors outside and killed more or less rapidly. A day or two afterwards his majesty would ask where so-and-so was. "Alas! sire," was the answer, "he died of chagrin shortly after the lord of the earth and ocean cast eyes of displeasure on him." Then the Convener of the Fifth Great Synod quoted a pious saw from the Lawka-needee, and turned his mind to other matters. He made it a special boast that never in all his reign had he ordered an execution. Yet many people died of "official colic" during the time he was on the throne, and Colonel Sladen arrived sixty seconds too late with a respite for one of the pious monarch's own sons. The sound of the hoofs of the English Resident's horse as he galloped past the astrologers' monastery to the execution ground only quickened the headsman's sword. The hapless min-thah should have perished with the setting sun. There were still long shadows slanting up from the trees by the royal foundry, when the colonel reined in and upbraided the presiding Minister for his bloodthirsty haste. The Linga-yahma Sadaw when he heard the story, said the ayay-baing should have been a Buddhist and might probably become a yahanda in no very distant existence.

Yet King Mindohn was undoubtedly a kindly man. The stories which occasionally appeared about him in the English papers of twenty years or so back were not true. He never got a pea-rifle and "potted" his subjects from the palace verandahs when he was bored. They libelled him who said he did. He was a good Buddhist, and never took life of man or animal. King Theebaw was, perhaps, not quite so strict in his notions. When he first came to the throne he unearthed the spear with which his grandfather Tharrawaddy used occasionally to spit his counsellors. The young king's aim was not quite so good, or his purposes not quite so deadly. He prodded a few heralds and interpreters, and

flung the spear at one or two of his father's trusted advisers; but it is not recorded that he ever actually killed anybody with his own hands. In fact, he got on fairly well with his ministers, having drilled the seniors into complete submission to his wishes, and appointed among the younger members those who were most of his own way of thinking. The most characteristic man in the Cabinet was the Hlay-din A-twin-woon, better known as the Hpoung-woon. He was only of the second official grade, but none of the four woon-min-gyees had any real power. They dated from the last reign, and were practically over-ridden by the younger party. The king did, it is true, marry the daughter of the Kampat Min-gyee, but that stolid old gentleman was always remarkable for his disinclination to do anything at all, and was not at all likely to exert himself unduly for the sake of precarious pre-eminence. Therefore the ex-Mayor of Mandalay, in conjunction with the Yanoung prince, a favourite of the Queen Soo-payah Lat's, and one or two others of the young Burman party, became the most representative ministers.

The A-twin-woon wore the dragon tattooed on the nape of his neck. Fourteen years before he was a slave, and in position little better than a coolie. His rise from this rank might have been a credit to him if it had been effected by his own powers. But he rose by a mere accident, and carried all the tendencies of his original position with him. In 1866, when two of King Theebaw's half-brothers, the Mingohn and Mingohndeing princes, rose in rebellion against their father, the late king, the Hpoung-woon—he seems more familiar under his old title—was one of the guards in the palace. After the rebels had killed their uncle, "the War Prince," they made for the Summer Palace, where the king was at the time along with Colonel Sladen, the British Resident. The Summer Palace is a small building outside the stockade of the actual nandaw, and it was foreseen that his majesty would make immediately for the eastern gate, which is quite close at hand. A man was therefore stationed there with orders to kill King Mindohn whenever he made his appearance. All happened as had been surmised with one slight exception. Royal blood in Mandalay never goes outside the palace on its own legs, and when his

majesty reached the gate he promptly jumped on the intending regicide's back and bade him carry him over the esplanade. The man was so overcome by the royal presence, or so slavishly accustomed to do what he was ordered, that he obeyed. When they were safe within the inner stockade he stooped down to let the king dismount, and his sword fell from the folds of his waistcloth. None but the king may carry arms within the nandaw, and the Hpoung-woon, grasping the situation, snatched up the sword and cut the man's head off. Mindohn Min, with a curious regard for this mixture of barbarity and rapidity of action, made the coolie a subordinate official on the spot, and since then the Hpoung-woon has gone on distinguishing himself as on this occasion. He was promoted successively through the grades of slipper-bearer, tea-server, and betel-box holder to that of the Governor of the Royal Rafts or Barges (Hpoung-woon), and Mayor of Mandalay (Myoh-woon), which latter steps he gained through his activity in the palace massacres —loyalty and energy his patent called it. King Theebaw found in the bloodthirsty and remorseless woon a willing and enthusiastic helper in the murder of the princes and princesses. The governor lost two nights' sleep that he might not miss a single item of the horrors, and might be assured that none of the royal victims were allowed to die too easily. It was he who had a pregnant woman disembowelled before her husband's eyes. With his own hands he dashed out the brains of some helpless infants, swinging them by the legs against the prison-walls. Naturally he was one of the king's firmest supporters, for Theebaw's fall meant his own certain death. His squat figure and vulturine face made him the most easily recognised of the court circle, and he repaid the aversion of Englishmen with a most demonstrative hatred. As Hlay-din A-twin-woon, or Minister of the Interior, he had supreme command over all the lower fluviatile provinces, and had a large military force at his command.

Equally high in the king's favour, and not less fierce in their denunciation of the English, were the Teing-dat A-twin-woon and the Yaynangyoung, also of the same second grade. They, too, were prominent in the massacres, and had a particular penchant for drinking curaçoa in tumblers. Both

were slaves of the young Theebaw prince when he was a boy in the English Missionary school, and followed his fortunes into the Royal Monastery. As chiefs of the Let-thohn-daw, the Royal Page Bodyguard, they had the opportunity which won their rank. A daughter of the Tein-dat is married to a half-bred Frenchman, and the A-twin-woon in consequence gave occasional "dinners" to the European and quasi-European dwellers in Mandalay. The guests were, as a rule, not in a position to brave his anger by a refusal, and had to endure most elaborate indignities at his hands. All the most humiliating formalities of the palace had to be observed towards the young minister, and the *menu* was said, by the victims, to be the worst of them all. In regard to this, it must be remembered that it took a very great deal to hurt the dignity of a Mandalay European.

These three a-twin-woons were the most powerful ministers, and had greater influence with the king than any of their technical superiors. The four woon-gyees were, with the exception of the Oopathee, of very little account with any one. The Loung-shway Min-gyee had been for long nearly bed-ridden, and was not able to appear even at the late king's funeral. The other three had all been in Europe, but the most that can be said of the Kampat Min-gyee is that he became the king's father-in-law, while the Yaw was absent for nearly two years on an expedition against the Shan mountaineers. He effected nothing warlike, and rumour said that he was so fully occupied in keeping the troops from dispersing to their homes that he had no time to fight. The fourth, however, was a remarkable man. The Oopathee, better known as the Kin Woon-min-gyee, had been very prominent, and still lives as a pensioner of the British Government. He used to be commonly spoken of as the premier on English analogy, but there was really no such dignitary known in Burma, and the Kin Woon-gyee's substantive appointment was simply that of foreign secretary. He was twice to Europe on embassies, and his naturally acute mind has thus been enlarged in its views. Had it not been for his great command over the public feeling, and his influence even over King Theebaw, there would certainly have been war between Burma and Great Britain in 1879. The foreign secretary was

the representative of order; and it was a bad thing for the country when he was almost entirely driven from power, if not from office. He was a master of oriental craft, and tided through all the intrigues against him. He held a document from the late king, granting him immunity from all kinds of death. The list is a very frightful one, and ranges from vulgar, obvious beheading to the refined cruelty of throwing on a spread-eagled victim a nest of the fierce red ants known as kah-gyins, whose mandibles drive a man raving mad in little over a quarter of an hour. But the palm-leaf patent would have been of little avail without a head that was well able to take care of itself. Like many of the older and better ministers, the Oopathee Min-gyee came from the cloister to office. On the late king's accession to the throne, he at once appointed the Pakhan Min-gyee from a monastery to be an a-twin-woon, and in no very great time to the supreme rank of min-gyee, a skipping of the lower grades which was very unusual, as was also the circumstance that the new minister married one of King Tharrawaddy's widows. The Kin Woon-gyee was in the Pakhan's monastery, shared his rise, and when the patron, who never lost the bilious, monkish look, and the cold, awkward pohn-gyee's manner, obtained the deliverance, succeeded him as min-gyee. Had he been permitted, the foreign secretary would have made Burma a very different country from what it was.

The Oopathee was certainly a superior man, but undoubtedly the most singular of the Mandalay court officials was the Pan-gyet Woon. He was a polished gentleman, spoke English fairly and French and Italian fluently, and had considerably more than a veneer of civilisation. As a boy he was at school in Calcutta, and having been well grounded there, proceeded to France. There he took his degree at the Panthéon, obtained a diploma in the Central Imperial School of Arts and Manufactures in Paris, and was altogether nearly twelve years in Europe. Notwithstanding his reminiscences of Mabille and the Champs Elysées, however, he accommodated himself very well to circumstances. When the young woon returned to Mandalay, King Mindohn had a long talk with him, and finally said: "And these foreigners, then, have they in any of their cities buildings such as adorn our Royal

City of Gems?" "Alas! your majesty," he replied, "the luckless people have not the magnificent teak; how, then, can they hope to raise anything comparable to the meanest of your palaces?" This courtier-like caution never deserted the Pan-gyet Woon. He never meddled with politics, and was content with his governorship of the glass manufactories, which meant anything or nothing, and commanded a nominal salary. But none of the ministers had any salary from King Theebaw, so that the cultured sinecurist was not worse off than his fellows. He consorted a good deal with foreigners, but averted suspicion by saying that it was merely to keep up his knowledge of their languages. No doubt he might have had a much higher post, but he had enough money, and did not care to run the risk of trying for more.

## CHAPTER LIV

### THE BURMESE ARMY

THE Burmese army was not thought very much of even by the most patriotic Burman who had seen soldiers in other parts of the world. Malignant people called it a rabble; more smooth-tongued and favourably-disposed critics were fain to acknowledge that it was deficient in discipline. In physique and courage the men were formidable enough, but flintlocks and long Enfields do not avail much against the breechloader, and when complete inability to manœuvre was added to this, it was evident that even in jungle warfare, except against an equally ill-armed foe, King Theebaw's forces would make but a sorry show. Military instruction of a certain kind they had, but it never extended beyond squad drill, and even this was but very perfunctorily learned, while movements of large bodies of men were never attempted, except the so-called reviews, which took place every now and again, and in 1879 were held within a day or two either way at the full moon of every month. These "reviews" were, however, nothing more than marches-out on a big scale, and were only useful as a means of displaying the soldier in the glory of his uniform, and giving him a little exercise. Except on these occasions, indeed, it was seldom that you saw the soldiery in military dress. Even when on guard they dispensed with every article of warlike attire, except the gun, and even that was more frequently to be found in the rack than in the sentry's hands. These military promenades, therefore, offered the most favourable opportunity of observing the royal levies.

The troops mustered at an early hour in the wide glacis between the inner and outer stockades of the palace. There

they fell in, in a formation of fours, and remained placidly waiting; conversation went on freely, and smoking and chewing betel were not interfered with. The boh-gyee and other officers of rank meanwhile assembled within the inner court. After, perhaps, three or four hours' waiting, the king came out and inspected the forces through a field-glass from the head of the broad flight of steps in front of the Hall of Audience, or, perhaps, a notice was sent out that his majesty would not even view his troops in this easy fashion, and the army was saved from the—to English notions—exceedingly unchivalrous attitude of grovelling on its stomach for a matter of two minutes while the king looked through his binocular.

This over, the non-commissioned officers said *hé!* and the men sloped arms and started off anyhow. Outside the eastern gate a halt was made while the boh-gyees, colonels of regiments, mounted their elephants, got into position, and marshalled their bodyguards round about them. The lesser bohs and thway-thouk-gyees, "great blood drinkers," were mounted on ponies and had their personal retainers about them too. The commanding officer came at the head of his regiment, preceded by twenty pages carrying double-barrelled smooth-bores in red cloth covers. These pages were all dressed alike, according to the individual taste of the commander, in uniform turbans, tunic, and pasoh. The livery of the young Kachin colonel of the Fourth Regiment was the most effective—red-flowered turbans, French grey jackets, and red pasohs of the wavy "dog's tooth" pattern. The colonel of the Third Regiment, on the other hand, revelled in bilious contrasts—pea-green goung-boungs, flowing red tunics, and yellow waist-cloths of what a 'Varsity tradesman would call a neat quiet plaid pattern. This bodyguard walked at either side of the road in loose Indian file to see that the way was clear. The boh himself rode an elephant, gorgeously caparisoned, with tassels and streamers trailing to the ground from the velvet-covered howdah. He was dressed in the national turban and pasoh, but wore a tight-fitting tunic, covered with gold lace. All of them were either smoking or chewing betel. Behind the elephant came the umbrella-bearer, or, perhaps, two or three of them if the officer had attained such distinction.

The actual commander of the regiment seldom came

out to the review, so that there were comparatively few gold umbrellas, but the red and green ones with deep fringes added perhaps more to the brilliance of the array, considered simply as a spectacle. Behind the htee-bearers came the minor officers, mounted on ponies, with the ordinary Burmese scarlet cloth saddle and tassels sweeping over the animal's flanks. Each of these minor chiefs also had his umbrella borne over his head, and a score or two of spearmen guarded the flanks of the cavalcade. Mingled up among them was a confused crowd of cheroot-bearers, spittoon-holders, betel-box carriers, and similar functionaries such as accompany a Burmese grandee wherever he goes. Behind this motley assemblage came the regimental colours. These were bifurcated red pennants, bearing the number of the battalion, and leogryphs, lions, dogs, dragons, and similar distinguishing emblems for the different regiments. The standard was not very ponderous, but occasionally the bearer—he was not an officer—got tired of carrying it over his shoulder and lowered it to the trail without seeming to injure any one's sense of congruity. He was followed by the band, or a portion of it, for the musicians were scattered in twos and threes all over the regiment, usually at the head of a company, but not by any means necessarily so. Burmese music is ordinarily far from soft and gentle. At a play the trumpets blare, and the gongs, cymbals, and clappers clash and jingle and rattle in truly inspiriting fashion. But no such spirit-stirring strains are considered necessary to rouse martial ardour. A military bandsman required no preliminary education. All he had to do was to tap, tap away in the most stolid and monotonous fashion on a chee-noung. This is a brass or bell-metal gong, about the size of a dessert plate with a small round boss in the centre. The sound is sweet, and they are pitched in different keys, but a low-country Burman is at a loss to divine their precise use. The sound does not travel far, and they are not beaten in any fixed time, besides that the a-hmoo-dan would not step to it if they were; so that if it were not for the dignity of the thing, there might just as well have been no band at all. But there they were, and they jingled away and stopped and began again in the most casual and independent possible way.

After all this came at last the a-hmoo-dan, King Theebaw's army of "immortals" in full array. It was not a pleasant sight for one who did not care to see his fellow-countrymen ridiculous. It was just possible to make out that they were marching in column. Here and there was a ragged resemblance to an alignment of fours, achieved for a few minutes apparently more by chance than anything else. The soldiers were very gorgeous. Peony roses and sunflowers were as nothing to them. All had red tunics, but the facings, which were broad, were different in each regiment. Some were yellow, some green, some blue, some nondescript, and the effect on the red ground was not always pleasing. The trousers were very various. Blue, with a broad yellow stripe down the side, or occasionally for the sake of variety down the front or the back, green and red, yellow and maroon, scarlet and brown, were a few of the combinations. On their heads were worn helmets with burnished spikes, and a small metal dragon in front. These helmets do not suit at all with long hair. The topknot of a good many is so large that the *pickelhaube* balances on it, and wobbles about in undignified fashion.

The majority, however, found that the most satisfactory way of avoiding this was to put the helmet on the back of the head, which imparted to them a dissipated appearance, which was far from martial-looking. Not a few found the difference in weight between their ordinary silk turban and a papier-mâché or plaited wicker helmet more than they could bear, and solved the difficulty by carrying their headpiece on the end of their carbines. This met with no remonstrance or opposition on the part of the non-commissioned officers, who, armed with spears, marched at irregular intervals along the flanks of the column. The soldiers had no belts, and therefore no scabbards, and proceeded with bayonets fixed. The Fourth Regiment, commanded by the young Kachin before alluded to, had a habit, whether for the sake of distinction, or as signifying that they were prepared at any moment to give cold steel, of sloping arms in an eccentric way. Grasping the rifle at the upper band, they threw the butt over the shoulder and proceeded with bayonets sticking out in front. As a necessary consequence they did not straggle so much as

the others, for if a man lagged he was wakened up by a prod from the point of the bayonet in the nape of the neck, or between the shoulders. The chief objection to this method of keeping the men at fairly regular intervals, was that a prick in the rear was as likely as not to pass right on to the head of the column, with the result of a volley of abuse and very considerable disorganisation.

The marines were the strongest in point of numbers, and far and away the best in drill. They kept their alignment very fairly, and frequently as many as three men in a section kept step. Their uniform was a blue-frogged red tunic and blue trousers with a scarlet stripe. On the helmet they wore an anchor instead of the ordinary dragon of the line. Their colonel was the Hpoung-woon, Myoh-woon, now Hlay-din A-twin-woon, the minister who was so energetic in the palace massacres of 1879. The credit of their discipline was, however, entirely due to Commotto, a young Italian naval officer in the king's service, and engineer of all the river forts. The marines were quite a thousand strong, and their officers were mounted just like the rest. When there was practice in the war-boats, the mayor-colonel viewed the performance from the back of an elephant on the river-bank. Like all the great men, however, he did not trouble himself to go out to the reviews.

The men smoked in the ranks and hailed their friends along the route in the freest possible fashion. When a man wanted a light or a drink of water he simply fell out and went in search of it among the spectators, rightly enough assured that none of the officers would bother their heads as to the reason of his departure. All along the line of march men who had been delayed in this way might be seen scuttling along to get somewhere near their proper places. Here and there one might be seen far away from his regiment, having been seduced into conversation with a friend. Now and then the non-commissioned officers caught sight of an Englishman looking on, and woke up to a sudden sense of their responsibilities, delivering sounding thwacks with the butt end of their spears on the shoulders of any stragglers within reach in most energetic and official fashion. As a rule, however, they contented themselves with getting over the ground. Many of the recruits viewed their trousers with very grave suspicions

They evidently thought that unless precautionary measures were adopted, the article would slip off, and therefore, with a vigilance which did credit to their sense of modesty, held on tight with one hand to their continuations. Perhaps the tailors were to blame. But in any case the attitude was undignified, and certainly not military. The garment was not regarded with any favour even by the veterans. When the a-hmoo-dan were on guard they generally wore the ordinary waist-cloth and carried the trousers in one hand to show their status. The tunics were almost never worn except at the reviews.

Between regiments came four cannon, pulled by men, and with little pennons stuck in the touch-holes. Two gunners accompanied each two-pounder, one carrying a galvanised tin bucket and the other a big canister, intended for shot and powder, but singularly unfitted for such material on a campaign. Sponges and rammers were wanting, and the men who drew the pieces were the bombardiers.

After the infantry, at an interval of two hundred yards, came two regiments of cavalry, numbering about five hundred lances in all. They wore helmets of Grecian pattern, but otherwise were in the national dress. The second of the two was the celebrated "Kathay Horse," who have won in English books on Burma a fame unknown in their own country. They were dressed in French grey jackets and red pasohs, and looked very well; but their mounts were very poor for a country where ponies are so plentiful and where it was so easy for the commander to demand their excellence. The saddles had long flaps or wings hanging down in front to protect the riders' bare legs when riding through underwood, but it was so long since they had been in the jungle that the flaps were more of a decoration than a necessity. Cavalry is an arm of the service of little use in a country like Burma, but with their long slender lances and splendid trappings they made a fine show, and not very much more could be said for the infantry—not so much in some cases.

The lancers were followed by the commissariat and control departments, a rabble of men carrying pots and pans and rolls of bamboo matting and boxes intended for ammunition, but containing none, and huge wicker baskets, besides a lot

of other baggage which might be useful, but did not look like it. There were five or six hundred of these men, guarded by a handful of dah and spearmen.

In their wake followed the artillery corps; first, thirty or forty two-pounders, similar to those between the different regiments, and with the same complement of men to each gun, and the same appliances. Then the elephant battery, each elephant with two jingals mounted on the howdah. These jingals, throwing a half or three-quarter pound ball, with their long pointed tails and muzzles pointed up to the skies, look very much like telescopes from a distance. In actual warfare they would probably do nothing beyond scaring the elephant. Besides the mahout, each elephant carried a man to manage the guns. Fifty of them were loaded with this mosquito artillery, and behind them came fifty more with nothing on them but the mahout. Many were most magnificent tuskers, and they constituted the most valuable part of his majesty's army.

Behind the elephants came the heavier guns, drawn by buffaloes, but they were apt to stick in the heavy, unmade roads, and the buffaloes themselves were not easy brutes to manage, especially on a warm day when their skin begins to crack. This battery, therefore, usually went but a short distance. These heavy guns were mostly very ancient ship guns of Portuguese, Dutch, French, and Arakanese make, and would be considered valuable in an English parish museum. They were innocent of any intent to kill any one, unless it be the firers.

This is not a very formidable account of Theebaw Min's boasted "Immortals," but events in 1885 proved that it was a true one, and when the time came for adding Upper Burma to the British dominions it was effected with the least possible amount of bloodshed on either side. It might be supposed from what has been said that the a-hmoo-dan had no drill, but this was very far from being the case. On the contrary, drill was going on constantly inside the palace and at the various guard stations. The French and Italian officers were always instructing them, but a want of belief in the utility of mass movements rendered all their efforts useless. The recruits went through the balance-step with

the utmost enthusiasm ; when it came to forming fours they were a little less ardent, but by the time they ought to have been counter-marching and right-forming company they were tired of the whole business and poked fun at the instructor. European officers called themselves, and were called, generals and colonels and what not, but they were simply drill sergeants and nothing else. They were allowed no uniform ; they never took command on a review day. Occasionally they complained of being insulted by their squads, and were told by a sententious min-gyee that patience is one of the ten virtues which go to the making up of a true gentleman. To recompense them for their trials they made a great deal of money in a variety of ways, their salaries being the least part, and paid at long and uncertain intervals in a lump sum. The real "generals" were men who hardly ever came out at all, least of all when there was a chance of fighting. The commander-in-chief was for many months in jail, but still retained his title, and two of his sons remained in command of regiments. The men who managed the reviews and any work that was to be done were all let-thohn-daw, the king's pages of honour. Few of them were over twenty, but their duties did not require much experience.

Besides the legitimate drill, conducted by the European instructors, there were other performances, the object of which would hardly be apparent to the compilers of the *Manual of Field Exercise*. The instructor, one of the junior officers, assembled the men in a big circle round about him, and proceeded in a fashion dictated to him apparently by nothing but his own fancy. He threw his gun into the air, caught it and cried *hé!* and the men followed his example to the best of their ability. He went through the same manœuvre behind his back, cried *hé!* again, and the men probably got some hard knocks in dutifully trying to imitate him. He cried *hé* and hunched up his shoulders ; cried *hé* and brought them down again ; slapped one thigh and then the other with a *hé ;* pirouetted on one leg and brandished a jointless limb in the air, crying *hé* vigorously, all which performances his squad copied as best they could. The men dropped off as they got tired, and by and by the instructor sat down himself, and the party dissolved or not as it pleased. Laughter,

criticism, and applause were constant throughout. This sort of exercise was almost constant in the capital in 1879, and it was pretty nearly the only drill the rural levies got. These latter were dressed in the uniform of the late king's reign, mostly cast-off tunics and trousers of the Madras native infantry. They wore round soup-tureen-like helmets, with a piece of looking-glass in front. Of these they were very proud, but did not disdain to drink water and eat their dinner out of them. There was only a limited supply of these adornments for the provinces, and as a consequence it was frequent for the man on guard to strip and hand over his uniform to the relief, and then go home happy.

There was no musketry practice. Occasionally on feast-days, or when his majesty went out, there was a lot of powder burnt, but it would have been a very risky matter discharging some of the more ancient firelocks, and so it was perhaps as well that class-firing was not introduced. The artillery never had any exercise. Burmans have not the same respect for big guns that the natives of India have. They imagine that such a big thing as a field-piece is sure to hit something, if it is only pointed in a general way in the right direction, and conclude therefore that any fool can manage a big gun without preliminary practice. The late king appointed a French officer to look after the gunners. This gentleman thought he must do something for his salary—rather an unusual thing with the king's servants—and accordingly as the men could not be induced to drill, took a battery out to the paddy-fields towards Yankeen-htoung for ball practice. There he got the guns into position and commenced firing. Loud sounds should never assail the royal ears, and when his majesty heard the din, he was fiercely enraged. The Kathay Horse were sent out in a body to stop it. The over-energetic Gaul was told that if he had not been an ignorant foreigner, who did not know any better, he would have been made a target for his own battery, but the Burman officer was flogged round the town. The guns were stowed away in the palace lest such an enormity might by misadventure be again perpetrated. There they remained till Theebaw Min got them disinterred for his reviews. He was perhaps less sensitive on the score of noise, but he did not send his gunners out

to practise, and they, as a rule, kept their spare clothes and cheroots and betel stowed away in the muzzles of their pieces.

The strength of the army at the disposal of King Theebaw was only limited by the number of men in the country. Every male was liable to serve as a soldier whenever he was called upon, and in 1879, when war with England was momentarily expected, levies of one man from every twenty houses, every twelve, every six, were called out, and finally an a-mehn-daw, or royal mandate, was issued, summoning every able-bodied man in the country to hold himself in readiness for taking the field. But in ordinary times the amount of a Burmese force depended not upon the number of the population, but on the body of men the neighbourhood could feed in a collected state, for it was the district and not the Government that supported them. At the best Theebaw Min could supply not more than 25,000 and 30,000 men with muskets, more or less useless, from long Enfields to ancient flintlocks, which would be most readily induced to go off by putting them on a fire. The method of raising forces was somewhat as follows. The king, with or without the advice of his ministers, decided how many men were wanted, and informed the Hloht-daw, which thereupon issued orders to all the governors of provinces, calling upon them to muster the quota which custom had decided their districts must provide. The provincial rulers then sent their instructions to the myo-thoo-gyees and teik-thoo-gyees, heads of townships and village circles, who in their turn communicated with the subordinate headman of each separate village. This last official, with the assistance of the house-reeves, singled out the men. Substitutes were allowed, and as every thoo-gyee was absolute in his own place, he usually made a very pretty thing out of such a levy, through fines and sums given to him to procure another man. The whole district was called upon to pay for the support and equipment of its contingent, and the men who were recruited were usually those who were unable to furnish their share of this tax. But the men who eventually went off as soldiers were not by any means commonly those whom the headman first nominated. He expected to have money

extorted from him by his superiors, and made his arrangements accordingly, naming all the wealthiest men in the place in his first list. This method of raising troops is not expeditious, but nothing under Theebaw's rule was expeditious, and it gave abundant scope for palavering and extortion, the two chief accomplishments of the rural officials.

The inhabitants of certain districts, however, were considered the hereditary soldiers of the Aloung-payah dynasty, and these levies were looked upon as forming the standing army. They held their lands by military service and were exempt from all taxation. They considered themselves to be the flower of the service and adopted *Junker* manners. A dragon was tattooed on the back of their necks, just over the shoulders, to signify that they specially belonged to the king, and, strictly speaking, they alone were entitled to the name of a-hmoo-dan. They mounted guard in the palace, and were almost never required to leave the capital. The chief Aloung-payah districts are in the north, round about Moht-shoboh, whence the founder of the present dynasty came. The rural levies got all the work there was to be done against marauding Shans and Kachins, and garrisoned the various fortified towns along the frontier. Many of these contingents were armed with nothing but spears and dahs. At Min-hla, near the old British frontier, where there was a well-constructed fort, was posted the strongest and best-armed detachment out of Mandalay. Near Ava there were three forts; one, the face of the old city wall, an earthen rampart thirty feet thick and twenty feet high, faced on the outside with masonry; a second on the other side of the river at Sagaing, and the third farther up at the bend of the river, at Shway Gyet-yet. These commanded the river at a point where vessels proceeding up the river had to round a dangerous reef of rocks. But with regard to these forts Captain Barker of H. M.'s 89th P. V., the best English authority on Upper Burma military matters, said, "without ditch, without flank defence, without expense magazines, without traverses to protect the gunners, they are mere shell-traps for the destruction of the garrison." He might have added that they were without armament. Mandalay itself has naturally a strong position because of its inaccessibility. To the east it is guarded by the Shan

mountains and the marshy plains below. Rivers and creeks make the approach from the south difficult. On the north is an impassable morass. On the west of the city are wide-spreading, thickly populated suburbs, and the river-side is defended by a high embankment. But the weakness of Mandalay lay in the worthlessness of the army and the feebleness of its armament. The kingdom of Burma was, in fact, nothing like so powerful as it was a quarter of a century ago, when the second Burmese war ended. When the end came Mandalay fell without a shot being fired.

# CHAPTER LV

## JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION

BUDDHIST law as it was administered in Upper Burma dates from the beginning of the now existing world. The first crime was theft; the first punishment was a scolding, speedily followed by a thrashing; and the first judge was Mahah Thamada, elected by vote of the people to be ruler over them. No doubt there were written laws then, but they have not come down to us. The written code in use was given to the world by Manoo, originally a cow-herd, but afterwards a minister. He found them written in large characters on the walls of another world, to which he was transported when in an ecstasy. These laws formed the first code. There have been since compiled from them eight other codes in the kingdom of Prome and other ancient states in Burmah. The last, called Mahah Menoo Tha-yah Shway Myeen, was drawn up on the foundation of the sixth kingdom of Ava, in the year 1137 B.E. (1775 A.D.), by Min-hkoung Gyee, who, with the aid of a learned monk, went through and carefully revised all the codes. These laws in their integrity are those which governed Upper Burma and now govern the whole of Burma in so far as they regulate social relations. The codes were written in Sanskrit and Magadha, a language usually called Pali through an error. The name Pali signifies really not a *language*, but a doctrinal text, handed down to Buddhists, as composed by pious disciples from the teachings of Shin Gautama. The Magadha or Pali code accepted is called Menoo Woon-na-nah, from its writer and compiler, a minister of state in Ava. It is looked upon as a com-

mentary on, or a key to, the codes, and contains the whole of the laws.

Besides the codes there exist also twenty standard collections of decisions, leading cases in which judgment was delivered by kings, queens, princesses, and ministers. These are by some regarded as obsolete, by many loo-gyees, however, considered to have still the force of law. The best known of these are :—

The decisions of Mahawthata, the embryo Budh.
" Weedooyah, one of the ten great avatars.
" Princess Thoodammasahree.
" Kootha.
" Dwotta Boung, first king of Prome.
" Sin-Byoo Shin.

The laws given by Manoo to the ruler Mahah Thamada numbered altogether eighteen. From these all others have been framed. The eighteen original laws had regard to :— 1. Borrowing money. 2. Deposits of money. 3. Stealing and altering the appearance of property and selling it. 4. When a gift may be had back on demanding it, and when not, there being six kinds of gifts. 5. Deciding the wages of carpenters. 6. Deciding the wages of labourers. 7. Breach of promise. 8. Deciding disputes between the owners of cattle and neat-herds. 9. Settling disputed boundaries. 10. Deciding whether property purchased may be returned. 11. Accusations. 12. Theft or concealment. 13. Assault. 14. Murder. 15. Deciding the proper conduct of husband and wife. 16. The question of slavery. 17. Deciding if cock-fighting, betting, or gambling debts shall be paid. 18. Partition of inherited property.

Manoo also laid down that persons appointed to administer the laws should not only have a competent knowledge of the code, but should also possess fourteen qualifications, as follows :—1. To decide in strict accordance with the law. 2. To be respectable. 3. To be of moral character. 4. To inspire awe. 5. To command love. 6. To be of good birth. 7. To be religious. 8. To be virtuous. 9. To be truthful. 10. To be talented. 11. To be devoted to the study of the law. 12. To possess honesty

of purpose and intention. 13. Knowledge of the principal parties and pleaders in a suit. 14. Fearlessness in deciding cases, or being lion-hearted.

The supreme court in Burma was the Hloht-daw constituted of four woon-gyees, the chief ministers of state, who held their meetings in a hall within the palace, which took its name from the court. Each woon-gyee (great burden) had its woon-douk (prop of the burden) as an assistant to sit with him in court. These woon-douks formed the third rank of ministers, under the four a-twin-woons (inner burdens), who were a kind of household ministers, or privy councillors, and sat in a special court, called the Bya-deht, also in the palace. The latter had nominally principally to deal with the monopolies which Theebaw Min set himself to establish in such abundance. But as any man, no matter what special education or preparation he might have had, was considered eligible for any post, political, military, civil, or judicial, so both the Hloht and the Bya-deht conducted all manner of business, from the external relations of the country to ordinary criminal or civil appeal cases sent up from the yohn-daw, the criminal court, where the myo-woons (city burdens), usually two in number, sat daily; or from the tayah-yohn, the civil court, where two tayah-thoo-gyees (great men of the law) presided. In either of these inferior courts it was not at all uncommon for a woon-douk, or even a woon-gyee, to attend and investigate important cases. But original suits were also frequently heard before the Hloht, and many cases were decided by the woon-gyees or any of the subordinate officials in their private houses. Formerly indeed this was the chief source of their salaries, for costs to the amount of ten per cent on the property under dispute went of right to the judge. The late king instituted the custom of fixed salaries, and Theebaw Min retained it, but neglected to pay the money. It will thus be seen that law matters, even in the capital, were carried on in a very casual, haphazard sort of a way. There was no attempt at a distribution of public business into departments, and each individual woon-gyee took his part in deliberations on all kinds of subjects with as much confidence as if he were an expert.

If the capital displayed a lack of system, there was certainly little to be expected from the provinces. The same general system prevailed in the separate districts. Each one was ruled by a governor, or myo-woon, appointed by the Hloht-daw or by the king, and armed with full powers, military, judicial, civil, and fiscal. Appeals might be sent from his decisions to the Hloht, but otherwise he was entirely irresponsible, as long as he was regular in forwarding the prescribed revenue to the myo-sah, the prince or princess, or other great personage who "ate" the province. The "town-eater" almost never went to his district, so that it was entirely at the mercy of the myo-woon, and might be squeezed by him as much as he thought proper and judicious. The subordinate officials varied in different provinces according to their requirements. All, however, had myo-sayays, secretaries, or town-clerks, nah-khan-daws, "receivers of the royal orders," and sikkès, chiefs in war, military officers, who formed a provincial council or court holding daily sittings and making reports to the myo-woon. In some districts, according to the duties, there were in addition to these an akohn-woon, or revenue superintendent, an akouk-woon, or collector of customs, as also in riparian districts a yay-woon, or myit-sin-woon, who had a jurisdiction over the entire river. This authority, however, very often vested in one of the governors. Thus the last Woon of Minhla had power of life and death, as high sheriff of the Irrawaddy, from his own town, close on the British frontier, right up to Sagaing, not far below Mandalay. Other officials were the htoung-hmoo, or jailer, the tagah-hmoo, governors of the gates, called win-do-hmoo in the capital, where they were very important officers, and the ayat-goung, heads of quarters, in all the larger towns. Under each governor of a province were a number of governors of the separate towns under his jurisdiction. These were called myo-oke when the appointment was temporary, or only for life, and myo-thoo-gyee when it was hereditary, as was most frequently the case. Besides these, in some of the provinces there were taik-thoo-gyees, governors of circles or groups of villages, each of which had its own yua-thoo-gyee, who in turn had under him sundry goungs to look after each his specially allotted number of houses. As each of these sub-

ordinates had to send in regularly to his immediate superior a certain fixed sum, determined without regard to favourable seasons, health of the population, or anything of that kind, and as each man was judge over the people in his charge, it may naturally be supposed that the general population did not lead a very happy life. Complaints might be made against extortion and illegal decisions, but the heads of tracts, if they had the money, could always stifle inquiry.

Some of the laws deduced from Manoo's eighteen original enactments strike one as being rather singular. For example, if two men quarrel and fight and one of them is killed, there is no penalty; but if a third party interferes and kills or injures one of the original combatants, he must pay the ordinary fine for murder, or causing hurt. Should he himself be killed, the other two are subject to no penalty. When a man is guilty of adultery with another man's wife, if it be proved to be the first time, he must pay the fine for adultery, usually the price of the woman, assessed according to the judge's opinion; if it is her second offence, he only pays half the fine; but if she has been guilty for a third time, he pays no penalty at all.

If one man curses another and some evil happens, he must pay twice the price of the damage incurred; thus, if the man dies he must pay twice the value of a man; two cows if a cow dies, and so on.

When the king dies there is a general pardon of all offences, and a remission of fines, except in the case of debt. There are also seven things which cannot be reclaimed after the death of the king under whom they were promised or given. These are:—1. Deposits. 2. Pledges. 3. Money paid wrongly by the parties in a law-suit. 4. Things carried off by violence, or seized upon without sufficient title. 5. Promises. 6. Things secretly stolen; and 7. Things that have been voluntarily given up by one man and taken possession of by another.

The decisions of Mahawthata, Princess Thoodammasahree, and others are of little value from a strictly legal point of view. They are chiefly of a religious character. The princess begins by saying that her cases are to be considered as guides to nobles and judges as to the line they

should follow. To an English barrister they would seem to be excerpts from the *Arabian Nights*, and as far from precedents as it is possible to imagine anything. The play of Mahawthata tells of the Lord Buddha in the birth in which he exhibited the most consummate wisdom and acumen, as in Waythandaya he embodies the spirit of liberality. In both these births, as in his last, Shin Gautama spoke from the moment he was brought forth. As Waythandaya he immediately entreated his mother for something to give in charity to the poor, and distributed forthwith the four hundred pieces of silver she gave him. As Mahawthata he appeared in the world with a plant in his hand, and, holding it up, said, "This is a medicinal herb." Throughout all this life he was constantly displaying extraordinary wisdom, jealous ministers being in the habit of propounding difficult cases to him. Thus he was shown a log of sha (*Acacia Catechu*), from which cutch, stupidly called *Terra Japonica*, is obtained, and asked which was the upper end and which the lower end. He solved the problem by putting it in the water, when the lower end, as being the heavier, sank deeper in the water. Another case is exactly similar to the famous Biblical decision of Solomon. These decisions, though they may be interesting, are hardly valuable as standard leading cases.

Some of the definitions of crimes in the Dammathat are a little singular. Thus among the ten descriptions of assault are mentioned: "saying in regard to a lunatic, a drunkard, or a half-witted person who is ill, that he will die, and he dies"; "refusing restitution for cattle killed"; "standing near an assailant." To avoid being summoned for one of the twenty-seven kinds of abuse one must be very circumspect, for there is ground for action if one says "Heh" to a man, as the Mandalay people are fond of shouting "Heh kalah" after Europeans. It is equally risky to address a man as "Hnin," *i.e.* in the third person; to say that he is "deficient in strength"; that he is a stutterer, bow-legged, broken-down, squinting, or afflicted with white spots on his body; that he is heretical, or, finally, that he is given to using bad language.

The niceties of the law may be illustrated by the following

case from the Talaing Dammathat. A man in search of honey climbed up a high tree to get at a hive. His foot slipped and he fell off a large branch on to a small one below. He was afraid that this would not be able to support his weight, and called out for assistance to a mahout, who was passing by on his elephant. The elephant-driver held up the hook with which he guided his animal and told him to come down by it. The bee-hunter seized the hook, and while he was holding it the elephant took fright and ran away. There were then the mahout hanging on to his hook and the bee-hunter clinging to the slender branch which momentarily threatened to give way. Fortunately, just at this moment four persons passed by and were called to by both the bee-hunter and the elephant-driver to come and save them. They could think of no other expedient than to hold out their clothes, which accordingly they did, spreading them out as high above their heads as possible, so as to break the fall. The two men dropped from the tree on their four preservers, but what between their own weight and the awkwardness of the iron driving-hook, the whole six were knocked senseless and fell on the ground. Whilst they lay in a swoon a doctor came up and gave them medicines which brought them round. When all had recovered, he demanded his fee. But the question was who was to pay him. The elephant-driver said that he should not be asked to pay because he tried to save the bee-hunter's life and was an innocent cause of the injuries sustained by his rescuers. The bee-hunter on his part maintained that he should not be called on for payment, seeing that if he had not held on so tight, the mahout would have fallen and been killed. Finally, the four rescuers said that it was utterly unreasonable to ask them to pay, seeing that it was through pure generosity that they had held out their clothes to save the lives of the mahout and the bee-hunter, and through this act of kindliness they themselves had been hurt. The elephant-driver and the bee-hunter somewhat thanklessly retorted that if a ladder had been brought, or had been constructed, they could have come down in perfect safety and without hurt to any one, and that therefore the four rescuers should pay.

The question as to who is liable in this case is a nice one, as also is the point as to who should be made defendants, and who should be the witnesses. The Talaing Dammathat says that the incident occurred in the province of Kaw-dohnpah-yit, in Hindustan, and that the case gave rise to the recognition of the root, trunk, and branches of the law, which till then had not been defined. From whom, or whether the doctor got his fee at all, we are not told.

Advocates, pleaders, or barristers were, we are told, unknown until a case occurred when certain suitors from the jungle came before the king and were not able to understand the court language. A court official was therefore allowed to assist them and turn their rustic jargon into comprehensible speech. These as "standing before" the king were called Shay-nay, as it were mouthpieces for the parties to the suit, and the king, who acted as judge. The convenience derived from their superior knowledge and experience afterwards led to the establishment of a regular body of barristers.

If the laws are, some of them, somewhat singular to those who are accustomed to the scientific Indian penal and civil codes, as well as to the growth of centuries of Western practice, the method of binding over witnesses to tell the truth, or at least the book on which they are required to pledge themselves, is sufficiently startling. The Book of the Oath, Chehn-sah, is still used in British courts of justice, and it is to be hoped that all the younger members of the population know what terrible punishments they are drawing down on themselves when they hold it over their heads and promise to tell the truth; what frightful penalties will befall them if they swerve in the least degree from the exact facts of the case. In the old times a man used always to be sworn on this book in a place where there was no shadow, or in a pagoda, and in most places in Upper Burma there is still a special shrine where the oath is to be taken. There is one in Mandalay, and at the Shway Mingohn Payah, near the oil-wells of Yaynangyoung, there is a stone, ordinarily deposited between two images of the Hentha, the Brahminy goose, which the swearer takes in his hand, lamps being lighted at the same time. The book

itself might not be kept in ordinary places. Some copies were kept in the court in a specially consecrated box, some in a zayat, and some, more terrific in their denunciations, in little receptacles fixed high up in trees.

With the view of guarding thoughtless or reckless people against themselves there were certain classes enumerated who should not under any circumstances be allowed to take the oath, or to appear as witnesses. These were :—1. Those who do not believe in the merit of good works. 2. Such people as trade with the goods of others. 3. Parties interested in the case, as well as their relations, friends, and enemies. 4. Great talkers. 5. Sick persons. 6. Old men. 7. Children. 8. Overbearing men. 9. Public singers. 10. Actresses. 11. Women of ill fame. 12. Goldsmiths. 13. Painters. 14. Blacksmiths. 15. Cobblers. 16. Asthmatic persons. 17. Low people. 18. Gluttons. 19. Gamblers. 20. Hot-tempered people. 21. Doctors. 22. Thieves. 23. Pregnant women. 24. Hermaphrodites, a by no means uncommon class in Burma. If, however, both parties to the suit gave their consent, some of these classes might be allowed to give testimony. Another curious old provision was that when one of the litigants produced a witness, he himself was not required to take the oath, while contrariwise, if he swore on the book, it was not imperative that he should call witnesses.

The Book of the Oath is not quite fixed in its length, nor in the number of the imprecations which it threatens against false witnesses. Some copies are much more diffuse than others. It is always written on palm-leaf, in the ordinary character, and these in English courts are kept wrapped up in the ecclesiastical kabbaluè, usually sewn for greater convenience. The commonest version is as follows :—

I will speak the truth. If I should be influenced by the laws of demerits, namely, passion, folly, anger, false opinion, immodesty, pride, scepticism, hard-heartedness, then may all these calamities attend me and my relations, wherever we may be, by land or by water, travelling or remaining quietly at home. May the nats who guard the sacred heavens, the athoora nats and all other giants, the nats who guard the three Baskets of the Sacred Law, delivered by the most

excellent Buddha, and all the other holy writings and sermons; may the nats, the guardians of the sacred relics, the holy hairs, the teeth, the jawbone, the frontal bone, and all the other relics; the keepers and warders of countless shrines, all golden and made famous by sacred memories; the protectors of the images and figures of the supreme Buddha; may the nats who guard the sacred mount and all the hills of the Southern Island; the nats who watch and ward the mighty rivers, the lesser streams, the lakes, the torrents, cataracts, and whirlpools; the nats who preside over the vast forests and the single trees; the nats of the sun, the moon, the stars, and meteors, the clouds, winds, mists, and exhalations; may the nagah and the galohn, hideous dragons, and cruel birds, all beeloos, ogres, demons, warlocks, all the evils that come from without the body; may all these spirits and ill things unite to slay me and mine, to the utmost limits of kinship, if I speak not the truth.

When I and my relations are on land, let all the hideous land creatures, tigers, beloos, elephants, male and female, demons and giants, buffaloes, poisonous serpents, the cobra, and the hamadryad, the scorpion, and the centipede; may they all seize, bite, crush, strangle, and devour us; may the earth open and swallow us up; a thunderbolt from heaven descend and annihilate us, if I speak not the truth.

When we travel by water may our boats sink and be shattered by storms; may crocodiles, writhing snakes, and ravenous fishes, kill and devour us, that we suddenly die, perish, and come to utter destruction, if I speak not the truth.

May the five calamities occasioned by fire, water, thieves, governors and enemies oppress us; may we be subject to all the maladies of the body; may we be as fools and idiots, afflicted with madness and leprosy, with all kinds of loathsome disease and evils that deform the body, with itch, scurvy, ulcers, deafness, blindness, dysentery, the plague, and all manner of mental and corporal miseries; may we incur the hatred and punishments of judges and rulers; may we be for ever separated from our forefathers, children, and relations, throughout all succeeding worlds; may fire destroy our goods; lances, swords, arrows, and knives, and all sorts

of weapons cut and pierce and maim our bodies; may I die instantly, vomiting up clotted, black blood before the assembled people, if I speak not the truth.

Moreover, if I speak not the truth, may I and all my family after death be instantly cast into the abyss of hell, there to wander for a cycle of worlds through the eight great hells, and all the smaller ones, suffering from all the torments of these places; and when at length I shall emerge thence, may I become a pyehtta, or a thooyakè, and thereafter some hideous animal, passing through all the wretchedness of the four states of punishment. Finally, when after innumerable worlds I shall at length once more become man, may I be the slave of other men a hundred and a thousand times, if I speak not now the truth.

But if I speak truth, may I and all my relations escape the three calamities, the four states of punishment, and the five enemies; may all the ills in the body and all that are without the body keep far away; may our wealth, honour, and estimation ever increase, and when we die may we attain the happiness of men and dewahs, and speedily entering on the noble path, reach the cloudless peace of Neh'ban.

A desire to avoid denouncing on themselves all these fearsome penalties led in the old times to a good deal of trying by ordeal, a form of decision which still prevails extensively in country districts in Upper Burma, and occasionally was made use of even in Mandalay. The forms used are those familiar in old times in other parts of the world, such as eating consecrated rice, like the first English *corsnaed*, plunging the finger wrapped in a thin palm-leaf into melted tin; immersing accuser and accused in water to see who would remain longest below and prove his innocence or guilt. The yahans are usually present on these occasions, and recite certain formulæ beforehand, a great concourse of people assembling to see the test. The opposing parties wade into the river, or into a tank, up to the chest and then duck under, a couple of men holding a board over their heads to keep them down. The one that comes up first is cast in the case. Another form common at the pagodas is for both parties to resort thither, when the monks again recite the precepts and sundry other phrases. Then equal parts of

wax are carefully weighed out, and from these candles are made for plaintiff and defendant. They are lighted simultaneously, and the holder of the candle which first burns out is adjudged to have lost the case, and judgment is delivered forthwith. The winning party, for all the friends are always present, immediately cause their band to strike up, dancers perform and songs are sung, and every token of triumph is exhibited. Unfortunately, however, for any supposed efficacy of the system, substitutes are allowed, and in addition to this bribery plays as important a part almost as it did in the law-courts themselves. The man whose money goes farthest wins his case, whether it is decided according to the principles of the Dammathat, or the lottery of the ordeal.

The punishments inflicted were sometimes very cruel, and the treatment of the prisoners occasionally savage in the extreme. In criminal cases torture was frequently applied to extort confession from the accused or evidence from the witnesses. Rich men usually suffered nothing worse than a fine. For the impecunious, sentences varied from sundry stripes with a rattan, with or without imprisonment, to mutilation, perpetual slavery, and death. Except for debt, a man sentenced by the court to slavery became so with all his descendants for ever, and they were usually allotted to some pagoda, doomed to support life by begging as ta-doung-sahs, or relegated to some other of the outcast classes. Death in Mandalay was almost invariably by decapitation, the agony of the condemned being occasionally prolonged by a fiendish executioner; the custom of throwing victims to be devoured by wild beasts, or trodden to death by wild elephants in the elephant-trap, was latterly wholly given up. In the provinces, however, other methods were very frequently adopted. North of the capital "crucifixion" was particularly common. The le'wakat, or waka' teing, does not at all resemble the ordinary pictorial representation of the cross. It is more like a double ladder, consisting of three stout bamboos fixed upright in the ground, three bars lashed to them horizontally with canes, and over these again two crossbars in the shape of a St. Andrew's cross. These punishment stakes were always put up on the river-bank or on sandbanks in the stream, and were particularly common

where the Shan and Kachin hills come down anywhere near the Irrawaddy. Sometimes the criminal was killed before he was lashed up, sometimes he was tied up first and then disembowelled with a sword-gash across the stomach, or rendered helpless by a few spear thrusts. In either case the body was left hanging, to be picked clean by the vultures, and the bones gradually fell off. Formerly, when the mouth of the Irrawaddy was Burmese territory, a favourite method used to be to tie the convict down at the edge of the stream at low water and leave him to be drowned by the incoming tide. The fishes were often more expeditious than the vultures in devouring their prey. The favourite kind of stake for this purpose was the "stump of hell," the irregular short stem of the undeveloped trees in a mangrove swamp, looking like pinnacles or knobs rising out of the confused network of exposed roots.

But imprisonment was often worse than death. The prisons had never been cleaned out since they were made, some of them noisome underground cells, some flimsy wooden or bamboo structures open all round. The prisoners sat with their feet in the stocks perpetually, and the long bamboo which united them was occasionally triced up so far that the poor wretches only touched the ground with their shoulders. A favourite time for thus inverting them was at night. But a man who had not had enough money to satisfy the judge might often manage satisfactorily to square the jailer. If he effected that he was on the whole comfortable; he was allowed to go away in the morning, have his meals at home, and go back and deliver himself into custody at night again. But if he had no money, or no friends to pay it for him, his best course was to die at once, indeed he certainly would before long, for the only food to be had in prison was that supplied by relatives of the convicts. If no friend brought it, the jailer certainly would not supply any. It was better to be "proclaimed," to suffer moung chaw, than to go to jail. This was a punishment almost confined to the capital, and greatly resembling the old English naval practice of flogging an offender "round the fleet." The criminal was taken to each gate of the city, to the corners of all the chief streets, and to sundry other frequented places. At each of these points his crime and

sentence were read out and he was flogged. None but the strong-constitutioned could stand it, but those who survived were free men.

Notwithstanding the severity of the treatment in the jails, the laws were really very mildly administered, and there were few whose relations could not muster up enough to secure them immunity from torture. Capital sentences were on the whole rare, except when political considerations came in. Then there was no mercy.

## CHAPTER LVI

### REVENUE SYSTEM

THE first people, when they took counsel together and appointed a ruler to repress crime and manage the affairs of the country, agreed that each man should pay a tenth of his thalay rice, and this tithe system remained in force in Burma till the last reign, not merely for supplying the royal coffers, but also for paying all public servants. King Mindohn abolished the tithe system as far as the payment of local officials was concerned, and arranged to give them fixed salaries; but even in his time this law was somewhat of a dead letter, and under his son the last king, if governors and secretaries did not resort to old methods they got nothing. Unfortunately for the people the ancient system was by far the most profitable, and the collectors were not at all moved to agitate for their payment at stated times from the treasury. The actual exactions of these worthies far exceeded what appeared in their black parabeik notebooks, and were in fact only limited by the possessions of their victims, and occasionally by a slight fear of consequences, if a desperate man should complain to some powerful minister in Mandalay. Then the delinquent might be turned out to make way for a friend of the woon-gyee's. But, alas for the people, the change, if not exactly from king Log to king Stork, was only too likely to be from a well-filled stork to a lean and hungry one.

The division of the country for the collection of revenue was identical with that for administrative purposes, and the several duties were carried out by the same persons with the same assistants. The one man was civil administrator, judge,

colonel of the local militia, and revenue collector for his locality, whether province, circle, or simple village. The fixed revenue demanded by the myo-sah, whether prince of the blood-royal, minister, maid of honour, royal spittoon-bearer, or white elephant, was remitted to Mandalay by the resident lord-lieutenant of the province, together with a certain overplus for the "province-eater's" secretary, clerk, and treasurer. The whole amounted to from sixty to eighty per cent of the money nominally raised from the people, and the money kept back was supposed to pay for the services of the Myowoon and all his subordinates. But they would have been very much less great people if they got no more than this. It is impossible to say how much money was collected in any one district, or even in any single town. The steatite pencil records were easily effaced and altered, even if they were ever accurate, and no one knew anything of the details of taxation. A certain circle of villages was called upon to produce a certain amount of revenue to go to the capital, and as long as this was regularly paid no questions were asked. The governor divided out amongst the circles the quota each was expected to pay, and the taik-thoo-gyee in his turn made the allotment for the villages under his control; finally the village headman gave his instructions to the tithing-men, and they extorted all they could from the householders under their control. The system was admirably planned, but the working of it was execrable in its cruelty. Every Burman was the king's slave, and could not leave the district, far less the country, without the royal permission granted through the local authorities. The men who came down to reap British Burma paddy-fields in November and December had all of them to leave hostages behind, their wives and families or some near relation, to guarantee that they would return when the season was over to pay their ngway-daw.

This ngway-daw, or "royal silver," was the main source of the revenue. It was a house-tax or family-tax, not a capitation-tax, though its incidence was generally so arranged that it practically came to be a poll assessment, or at any rate a kind of rude property-tax. The amount of land cultivated, which naturally varied according to the number of hands available for the purpose, served as a guide, though it seemed

money matters it may be mentioned that when the final instalment was paid, considerably over the sum due was sent to Calcutta. When the overplus was returned, there was great discussion among the Ministers as to what could be the motive of the Indian Government in being so singularly scrupulous.

A good many districts were almost entirely exempted from taxes in recognition of special services required of them. The inhabitants of the capital were particularly well off in this respect. They furnished the troops to guard the palace and city. Moreover, it would have been much more difficult to oppress them with impunity, apart from the fact that if they were disaffected it would have offered a premium to rebels. For similar reasons some of the townships about Moht-sho-boh were free from the ngway-daw. It was from this district that Aloung-payah, the founder of the dynasty, came, and insurrectionist princes always made for Moht-sho-boh when they levied war. Several villages on the Irrawaddy, in consideration of supplying the royal gilded boats, manning the royal barges, and passing on Court despatches, were relieved from the family tax. But the petty officials took very good care that they did not grow rich on their immunities.

All these methods were more or less sanctioned by ancient custom. Modern ingenuity and requirements, however, found out new ways of raising money. The pious ardour of the late king led him to spend vast sums on the erection of pagodas and religious buildings of all kinds, as well as on the manufactories, cotton mills, foundries, and powder mills with which he crowded the suburbs of Mandalay, and closed when he got tired of them. All this cost a very great deal of money, which even the exaction of benevolences from wealthy courtiers failed to supply. Consequently Mindohn Min turned merchant and established a great number of royal monopolies. The producers were allowed to sell to none but to him, and he could fix the price which he was prepared to pay. For long, cotton, jaggery, timber, wheat, precious stones, and earth oil could only be had from the royal merchant, and the trade with British Burma was in anything but a satisfactory state. Then in 1867, Colonel Fytche, holding out the inducement of increased customs dues from the newly started Irrawaddy Flotilla Company's

steamers, persuaded his majesty to give up all the monopolies, except those of earth oil, timber, and precious stones; and to agree to a uniform import and export duty on all other goods and merchandise, passing between British and Burmese territory, of five per cent *ad valorem*. This treaty lapsed in 1877 and was not renewed. Nevertheless, King Mindohn did not renew the monopolies.

When his son came to the throne, he issued, or there was issued for him, a proclamation, stating that he was going to adopt Western forms of government, and expressly announcing that he had no intention of reviving the monopoly system. He was, however, with his wild, extravagant habits, very soon in as great monetary difficulties as his father, and from 1880 began steadily to sell monopolies and give grants of forest land for hard cash payments. The new monopoly buyers, haunted by a fear of British interference, and not by any means assured in their minds as to the stability of Theebaw Min's rule, were only anxious to get as much money as they could, and therefore paid only the most absurdly low prices for produce. The cultivators, finding all their labour in vain, began consequently in large numbers to give up farming or working in the forests, the consequences of which was a still further shock to the trade with British Burma and an entire inability on the part of the population the following year to pay the house-tax. Besides the monopoly system derived from the craft of his predecessors, Theebaw Min also hit on the notion of lotteries for the replenishment of his treasury. The system worked very well for a time, and brought in great quantities of money, but latterly the loose coin of the populace had all been netted, and the lottery source of revenue was pretty nearly worked out. In 1879 and 1880 Mandalay was perfectly flooded with lottery-offices, each under the superintendence of a minister of high rank. Those who were able to show the king the most money were highest in the royal favour, and consequently the rivalry between these worthies ran very strong. All manner of dodges were tried to entice speculators away from all other offices to the minister's own. The Hpoung-woon, Myo-woon, the lord high admiral, and lord mayor's establishment was generally admitted to be the

largest and best, and it was certainly he who first began to try and allure the people. He secured the old custom-house buildings for his office, and enclosed a wide expanse round about it with a strong bamboo fence. Porous pots of deliciously cool drinking water, each pot supplied with a number of tin mugs, were arranged on stands all round the sides. The antisoporific letpet, the gigantic, but soothing, green cheroot, and the good betel lay in great heaps on the tables everywhere, and vanished with extraordinary rapidity. A dozen or more punkahs were hung up and worked by coolies, so as to calm the brains and cool the heated faces of excited clients. Later on, when other woons and let-thohn-daw followed his lead, the energetic Hpoung-woon added bands of music, dancing girls, and even regular dramatic performances, kept up perpetually, to the other attractions of his place of business. Some managers strove to get the better of their neighbours by giving the people unlimited supplies of palm-toddy, in the hope that the heady liquor might induce them to risk their last coins. Others hit upon the device of returning one pice—about one farthing—on each ticket taken. Others again, desperate at the thought of being unable to render a good account to their royal master, engaged gangs of bullies, who went about threatening people with violence or false accusations in the law-courts if any but their master were patronised, while the Zay-gyo-daw myo-woon, Oo Thah Oh, in virtue of his official position, sent his subordinates to the Chinese gambling-house keepers, and forced them to subscribe periodically for fifty tickets at a couple of rupees each, if they hoped to retain their gambling licenses. Fired by his example, the Yaw Shway-deik and Teing-dat A-twin-woons also made use of their court influence to draw subscribers. Brokers and traders of all nationalities who had business with the palace were put down for a couple of hundred tickets or so, on pain of losing their contracts. One of the woon-douks was advanced and heedless enough to select the Damma-yohn, a place of worship and prayer, for his lottery-office. All the old lines were upset. Drawings were held whenever the lists were filled up, no matter whether it was an oobohnay, or a more sacred feast, and, as a consequence, the minds

of the people were kept in a state of perpetual unhealthy excitement.

Neither buyers nor sellers were to be seen in the bazaar. Cultivators sold off their farming stock and implements, and launched all their money into the state lotteries. Fathers sold their daughters, and husbands their wives, to have a final try for fortune, until the lottery managers issued a notice that they would give no more tickets in exchange for women. To fill up the totals faster, and draw in every available coin, twenty, or even more, people were allowed to club together to buy a single ticket. Business was entirely suspended, and all the people hovered about the lottery-offices, longing for the drawing, while cleaned-out speculators prowled about day and night, watching for an opportunity to thieve and rob. How it was that the plundered people did not rise against the government, or at least against the lottery managers, is a mystery, but they did not. The suburbs of Mandalay were filled for a time with ruined gamblers, until the soldiery were employed to drive them farther afield, when many made their way to the frontier, and recouped themselves by raids on British Burma villages. Eventually money failed, or the people were disillusionised, and the lottery-offices, though several remained open, drove but a very slight trade. Then Theebaw Min had to resort to other measures to meet his expenditure, and from July 1881 began disposing of monopolies right and left. Having finished the export monopolies, he commenced with those on imports. The British trade with Upper Burma was being steadily ruined, and the war which ended in the extinction of the kingdom of Burma was made inevitable.

## CHAPTER LVII

### LAND TENURE

IN India the Rajah has always been considered the chief proprietor of the soil and the lord paramount over all those who own it or dwell upon it. In Burma precisely the reverse of this system obtained. The king was indeed considered entitled to a share of the produce, and, as a matter of fact, undoubtedly got pretty nearly all of it; but the origin of the land tenure rested on an entirely different foundation. The Burmans go back to the first peopling of the earth and the appointment of the saintly Payah Aloung to be ruler over them. Mahah Thamada came after the lands had been pretty generally taken up by the people, and therefore the cultivators of the original thalay san had no intention of appointing him supreme landlord, when they chose him to be the source of the Law and of the administration of justice. He acquired a share of the produce of the country only by the free gift of the people, who, to provide revenues for him, of their own accord surrendered a tenth part of all their crops that he might be free to devote himself entirely to the management of the public affairs and the execution of the laws. This right to a tenth of the produce of the soil, and no more, is explicitly laid down in the Indian Buddhist code, the Dhammathat, or laws of Manoo. This ancient book, which, by the way, is entirely distinct from the Indian *Institutes of Manoo*, enunciates as follows in the sixth chapter: "The king, who is our ruler, must abide by the ten kingly laws. All land which is unclaimed shall be his, but he shall have no right to take all. Such lands as are cultivated by man, or have been previously reclaimed, shall

remain to the cultivator and his heirs. But he shall have a tenth of the produce of all rice-lands, orchards, and gardens; and all excise and ferry duties, as well as canals and public works, shall belong to him. Through a succession of worlds the first king, the great Mahah Thamada, has established one-tenth to be his portion for ever, and let this be regarded as an everlasting precedent."

According to the Dhammathat there are seven methods by which landed property may be acquired. These are as follows:—1. By gift from the king. This is made only to soldiers and officials. 2. By inheritance. 3. By purchase. 4. By allotment from civil officers. 5. By personal reclaiming from the jungle. 6. By gift. 7. By unchallenged occupation for a period of ten years.

The first two titles are called perfect. The remainder are open to question, and may be disputed by any one who can show a prior claim. In actual fact, however, it may be said that the man who reclaims for himself a piece of land out of the jungle becomes by his industry proprietor of the clearing, without reference to local authorities, village elders, or any one at all, and has thereafter an inalienable right to his tenure, with no dues to pay whatever, except the sum the taik-thoo-gyee may see fit to assess him at. That worthy's valuation, however, always displayed an enthusiastic belief in the fertility of the soil. The landed proprietor could dispose of it by gift, or he might sell it; otherwise it descended to his heirs and assigns in the order of succession; the whole right and title was essentially vested in the owner and the heirs of his body. The tenure was, therefore, by what lawyers call fee-simple, udal, or allodial right. The estate left by the original occupier was seldom broken up. The heirs tilled parts of it, or gathered the whole crop in successive years; so that the land did not require to be split up into infinitesimal parts. This practice was rendered all the easier by the thinness of the population. It was open to any one at any time to carve for himself out of the forest a holding of his own, and thus there was no temptation to break up the original family acres. It is singular that under a rule so completely despotic as that of Burma, where every man was the king's slave, and could not cross the borders without his permission,

the right of land tenure should always have been so fixed and certain. The fondness with which the people cling to their ancestral lands has something of almost religious fervour in its tenacity. As long as a family remains in the neighbourhood of their inheritance nothing will persuade them to give up their connection with it. In Upper Burma, to the present day, land is never sold as the term would be understood in Europe. The transaction which goes by the name of a sale is, in reality, a kind of mortgaging, or, more exactly, pawning, if such a term can be used with regard to land.

The estate passes from one occupant to another for a certain sum of money, and it is clearly understood that if at any time the original owner is in a position to reclaim his property he may do so whether the purchaser likes it or not. Farther than this even, the buyer cannot sell the land to a third party without first obtaining the consent of its former owner. Notwithstanding this feeling, however, it is seldom that a property can be found which has remained for any considerable length of time in the same family. This is owing to the constant rebellions and wars between Peguans and Burmese and Shans, which have torn the country for the last five hundred years. All those who were not killed were driven away from their former homes by ruthless invaders or were drafted off to fight for the king. In the short intervals of peace rival governors, in desperation for means to raise the revenues expected from their provinces, would tempt people away from their former homes by the offer of rewards or a reduction of body service. Thus in some cases the proprietors were killed out, in others they left for districts so remote that it was impossible to retain a hold on the ancestral property, however great their attachment to it. As an illustration of the sanctity attaching to ownership of land, the law concerning church lands may be quoted from Buddhaghosha's Parables: "Whoso shall take for himself or for another woot-myay, consecrated or glebe-land, shall become a mite, or a white ant upon that sacred ground for the whole of 100,000 cycles."

The eighteenth of the original eighteen laws given by Manoo to the king refers to the partition of property, and an elaboration of this points out sixteen descriptions of

children who cannot claim a portion of their parents' property. The distinctions are more minute than is at all necessary or indeed comprehensible. They include all children born out of wedlock, among whom are reckoned such as are born before the parents have been married ten months; all children that are purchased, or adopted by any other ceremony than that of abadeeta or keektima; and such as "from respect or affection style their guardians father or mother." The settlement of boundary marks was one of the earliest duties of the first ruler. The thalay rice became constantly scarcer and scarcer, and it was determined that it would be well to give every person his share and mark it off distinctly. The appointment of persons to execute this duty was the first occasion on which executive officials were found necessary. Manoo enumerated twenty-five objects suitable for legal landmarks. These included all natural objects, such as lakes, rivers, ridges, and hills, remarkable large trees and clumps of bamboos; artificial boundaries of an equally permanent character, such as pagodas, shrines for demon-worship, zayats, or rest-houses, stone pillars and sacred posts, wells and cairns; finally such singular distinguishing marks as heads of cattle, chaff, ashes, charcoal, sand, broken earthenware vessels, and men's bones. "Beating the bounds," one would think, must have been very necessary with the younger members of the household in the case of such perishable boundary lines as could be constituted by chaff, or even sand. In Upper Burma the cultivating population is so sparse that no difficulty is found in the matter of boundaries. In Lower Burma farms are as distinctly marked off as land-surveyors' chains can effect the operation in pointing out the little raised ridges which separate the plots of paddy land from one another. Nevertheless they are hardly such as the South of England farmers would approve.

These allodial tenures are the only ones which exist in Burma now. In independent territory there were two other kinds of holding, which were not, however, very numerous or extensive. The first of these were called thoo-gyee-sah fields, and consisted of certain tracts of land near the town or village set apart for the maintenance of the headman. As that

official was anything but a permanency, the tenant for the time being very seldom cultivated them himself, but let them out to farmers, who were required not only to pay him his rent, but as a rule had also to supply the revenue demanded from the owner by the State. There was therefore no very enthusiastic bidding for his lands, but he always got a tenant somehow or other. It would have been a bad day for the village if no one came forward. Every man in the place would have been called upon to work for a certain period on the Thoo-gyee's paddy-fields.

The third class of arable estates consisted of the lands known as bhanda, treasury, or royal fields. These were the private property of the king, and were cultivated ordinarily by the outcast lamaing, crown predial slaves. Sometimes, however, the whole of the farmers in the neighbourhood were summoned by roster to do their one, or three, or five days' work, for which they received no payment; on the contrary, if they tried to escape they were tied up and received a dozen or two according to the humanity of the district governor. Near the capital, where oppression never was so gross as in the outlying provinces, the cultivators of the let-daw-gyee were frequently freed from all taxation but the payment of the family tax, and some even, as in the neighbourhood of Oung-bin-lay, whose revenues were assigned by the king to the great "Arakan" pagoda, were let off even the ngway-daw. But these *corvées* were very irksome, for the payment of a little money would always ensure the omission of a name from the taik-thoo-gyee's list, and the work fell all the harder on the luckless remainder. The whole of the produce of the bhanda lands belonged of course to the king, unless where he had otherwise assigned it. What with revenue paid in kind and the crops of the let-daw-gyee, the late king had granaries as vast as those which Joseph built for the king of Egypt. Mindohn Min drew from them to pay his soldiery, varying the monotony from time to time with pieces of rotten Manchester grey shirting. Offerings to the Sacred Order, of whom he daily fed several thousands, also served to keep the storehouses within reasonable bounds. Theebaw Min turned his grain into money with all possible expedition, and the money vanished with equal rapidity.

The only analogy to the crown lands in British territory is found in the reservation of forests by the government for the preservation of teak and other valuable trees such as the thit-ka (*Cedreela toona*), thit-kadoh (*Pentace Burmanica*), and padouk (*Pterocarpus Indicus*), which are absolutely reserved, that is to say, no tree may be felled which has not been girdled by government forest officers, even by those who have bought the right to remove the timber. It is expressly stated that the lessee is in no case allowed to girdle trees on his own account, and the rules are in other respects of the most stringent and Oriental description. No toung-ya, or hill-gardens may be made in the demarcated tracts. A selection of rivers and streams is made which must be kept free from all artificial obstructions, whether for fisheries, irrigation, or other purposes. Unauthorised felling, cutting, marking, killing, or injuring trees of all kinds, shrubs or bamboos, the collection of wood oil, resin, and even leaves, and any interference with the soil, or its produce without permission, is made penal. Even the use of existing roads and bridle-paths may, if the forest officer sees fit, be prohibited. At present, out of a total area of about 80,000 square miles of teak-producing forests, some 13,000 square miles are thus reserved, but it is intended very shortly greatly to extend the State property. The Burman, who knows nothing whatever of game laws or edicts against trespassers, is inclined to look upon this stringent reservation of land which the ancient code declares free for all, as something far more despotic than the enforced labour and extortionate demands of national rule. Doubtless time will prove to him that it is a wise precaution to guard from destruction a slow-growing tree like the teak, and when the wandering hunter gets to understand that forest fires are a calamity and not simply an easy method of making a clearing, the State forests will come to be something less like pheasant covers than they now are.

Otherwise, waste lands, as in old Upper Burma, are by the law of the Dhamma-that open to all-comers. Any one can select for himself a tract of such land at his pleasure, and may clear and cultivate in any way he chooses, paying his tax upon it when the time for the annual assessment of land

revenue comes round. In many cases, however, he is allowed to hold his land free from taxes for such a period as may be necessary to bring it into a thorough state of cultivation. In such a case as this he has to apply to the Thoo-gyee—the old hereditary officers being retained throughout British Burma—of his circle, if the land does not exceed five acres in extent. If it is above that area, application has to be made to the English assistant-commissioner, or to the Deputy-commissioner in charge of the district, if the average of the new claim exceeds fifty. The land is then surveyed and a grant is drawn up specifying the term of years during which he shall be free from imposts. This varies according to the kind of jungle which is to be cleared away, and the kind of crops intended to be grown. The exemption is in no case for less than a year. If rice is to be grown, seven years is the longest term of rent-free tenure, but for orchard cultivation it extends to twelve years. In a few cases, where the nature of the ground necessitates, in addition to clearing away the forest growth, the digging of channels for irrigation, and the erection of dams, extension even of this long period is granted. As in France, Norway, Japan, and Switzerland, the farms are all very small, in some cases almost absurdly so. Along the old frontier the holdings averaged only about five acres, in the Rangoon district from sixteen to twenty acres is the ordinary size, but here and there are a few considerably larger. It would, however, be a great mistake to endeavour to introduce larger tenancies. It is entirely against the genius of the people, and the appearance of foreign capitalists could not be otherwise than disastrous. The present mode of cultivation is slovenly enough, and larger farms would most certainly not tend to remedy the defect, which is due in great part to the superabundance of available arable land lying waste. Burma is progressing fast enough as it is. The abundance of rich land, the facility with which rights over it can be acquired, the great demand for rice, and the ever-increasing counter demand for European goods, the fixed, though heavy taxation, the cessation of all irregular and unexpected collections, the absolute personal security enjoyed by all under the English administration: all these benefits have resulted in

the trebling of the population of Lower Burma during twenty-six years since the annexation of Pegu; in the more than trebling of the trade—the value of the sea-borne merchandise alone having doubled and reached twelve and a half millions sterling during the ten years previous to 1881—and in the wonderful increase in revenue, which makes Burma the most valuable of all the provinces under the Indian Government.

# CHAPTER LVIII

## MANDALAY AND RANGOON

[This chapter describes these towns as they were in 1881.]

AMERICANS talk, and with good reason, of the magic growth of their cities. But for mere mushroom growth, Mandalay will compare even with Chicago itself, and if we are to judge of the progress of a commercial place by the fair criterion of business results, Rangoon may hold up its head in confident rivalry with any of the typical American cities. Twenty years ago the site of Mandalay was swampy paddy land and rank jungle. Now an area of five square miles is covered with houses, many of them squalid enough certainly, and with large patches of unused land round about them, but none the less contained within the city limits. Rangoon came into British hands in 1852, and at that time possessed no commerce worthy of the name, indeed it was only known as the place for pilgrims to the Shway Dagohn pagoda to stay at, and the residence of the Regent of Pegu, as being the guard station on the most accessible mouth of the Irrawaddy. Ten years later, ships entered or cleared from the port having a tonnage of 295,000 tons, and the imports were worth £1,200,000, the exports £1,400,000, and since that date—about the same period when Mandalay was founded—the tonnage has increased to 1,000,000, the value of the imports to £5,000,000 sterling, and the exports to £4,000,000. In a quarter of a century the commerce of British Burma has risen to nearly £20,000,000 sterling. The population has quadrupled; public works are carried on; education is widely disseminated; the administration is carefully managed by British officials; a railway, 163 miles

long, has been made; there are 1300 miles of telegraph lines; stately law courts and other public buildings have sprung up, and so far from the work being a tax on the Indian Imperial Treasury, British Burma has been, after its first few years, more than self-supporting. For a considerable time it has contributed to the Imperial Treasury a clear surplus of a million sterling. The mere figures are in themselves surprising, but they cannot be truly appreciated unless they are read alongside the obvious, undeniable, and acknowledged prosperity and contentment of the native population. When Upper Burma is annexed, as every Burman believes it will be annexed, and every true Burman hopes, even more astonishing results may be expected, and the Ashay-pyee will prove the brightest jewel in the British crown.

In contrast with this, Mandalay has nothing to show but its size and its forced growth. So long as the king is a man who, like Theebaw Min, has never travelled twenty miles at a stretch in all his life, it cannot be otherwise. Now he has ascended the throne, he cannot leave the capital, and scarce dares even leave the palace. The perpetual incense of flattery naturally makes him

> Take the rustic murmur of the bourg
> For the great wave that echoes round the world.

Some of the ministers have visited Europe, and could reform the country, if they dared, but it is ill persuading the tiger to give up flesh-eating. They find it difficult enough to keep their heads safe, even when they do nothing, where there are so many lurking about for a chance to oust them. The fall of Burman rule is already overdue. Two ancient prophecies have been fulfilled: a hat-wearing nation has settled in the land, and ships have gone up the Irrawaddy, without rowers and without sails, and the old legend tells that these signify the doom of the princes. When the English Government ceases to mistake moral clap-trap for humanity, and nursery tracts for sound principles, we may hope to see all Burma cultivated and happy.

The mushroom growth of Mandalay is not to be mistaken for a sign of either prosperity or an advantageous situation. The astrologers and the king settled the new site between them, and when this was arranged a royal order came out

bidding all remove themselves from Amarapura to Mandalay on pain of death in case of refusal. The transference of a bamboo hut is certainly no very great undertaking, and occupies less than a week in the pulling down and setting up. But the hardship was none the less where the people had gardens, or fruit-trees growing in their yards. The Chinese alone remained firm. Their houses were of the usual substantial, heavy, Celestial architecture, and, moreover, they had built for themselves an elaborate joss-house, in splendour quite equal to the best in Rangoon. Consequently, they flatly refused to migrate the two or three miles distance to the new capital. The astrologers were as usual for using force, but Mindohn Min had more sense. The Chinamen were almost all British subjects, and moreover their dealings contributed substantially to the revenue. Their village therefore remained, and has served to drag out a long suburb beyond the Arrakan Pagoda as a kind of connecting link. Numbers of later arrivals, however, settled in the royal City of Gems, and the wealthier merchants all eventually moved their headquarters thither, so that his majesty triumphed in the end. The best houses in Mandalay, the only brick ones, in fact, are all in the possession of the Chinese and Mogul merchants. Burmans have neither the right nor the money to build anything but wooden erections. These latter have, however, the compensating advantage that they stand all but the most violent earthquakes, while the brick houses, even when they are strengthened by an elaborate wooden framework, usually collapse when there is anything like a heavy shock.

But the great majority of the houses are simply wattled huts, with large open spaces in their rear which serve to keep the town airy and well ventilated. According to Burman custom each house has its little shop with the entire stock in trade displayed to the view of the passer-by. As in all Eastern towns, those who occupy themselves with a regular handicraft all flock together. Thus the umbrella-makers and sellers of saddlery live to the south of the palace, vendors of bamboo-work and lacquered boxes to the west, while the potters and miscellaneous goods shops are mostly along the street that leads to Payah Gyee.

There is no attempt at metalling any of the roads, except the broad thoroughfare which leads up from the steamer ghaut, past the ministers' "villas," up to the outskirts of the town, for Mandalay lies two miles away from the river-bank, the idea being that at Amarapura the noise of the foreigners' steamers disturbed the royal repose. The big stones which represent the metalling on this one road are rather a trouble than otherwise, except to the vultures and egrets in the wet weather, when all around is a sea of mud, and the boulders form an eligible coign of vantage. Elsewhere the streets are cut into huge ruts, and the bullock-carts go along in the hot weather in a pyramid of dust, and in the rains a ploughed field would be smooth going in comparison. But the gaily-painted "carriages," which always suggest a dog-kennel on wheels to a European, are strongly built, and the fair dames inside are used to the jolting. It is only when the king or one of the queens goes forth that any attempt at road-mending is carried on. Then an amehn-daw is issued, Shin-buyin Twet daw moo mee, the Golden Majesty, will make a royal progress, and all along the route the house-reeves see that the rough places are made smooth, and the crooked places straight. Thus the main thoroughfares are kept in a state of fair repair. In other respects, however, Mandalay is vastly superior to all Indian towns. In all the city there is not a drain, but it is equally certain that neither is there a smell. There are no such slums as constantly offend every sense a man has got in the Black Town of Madras or the native quarters of Calcutta. This cleanliness is due to the exertions of the great multitudes of swine and dogs. The pigs form most efficient scavengers during the day-time, and wander all about in the most independent and ownerless fashion, charitable people in search of merit setting out daily meals for them, while all in common throw out their scraps and leavings in the confidence justified by experience that nothing will be left to decay. The great majority of the dogs, equally with the porkers, belong to nobody in particular, and make themselves comfortable under any house they come to, sleeping nearly all day and howling and fighting all night. These animals are all strenuous adherents of the Old Burman party, and cherish a most fanatic hatred for Europeans. The old

boar will run between the legs of the white man or of his pony, in a simulated state of alarm at the faded ghost-like face, while the pariah dogs let all the town know the progress of a foreigner by their fierce barking and snapping of teeth a yard or so off his calves. The dogs of one street pass him on to the next, so that it is impossible for a wandering Briton to go about the town unobserved. It will not soon be forgotten how the English Assistant Resident had to run for his life from the Mandalay bazaar. He had killed a snarling brute with a quick backward swing of his stick, and the pious life-regarding populace came out upon him armed with billets of firewood and formidable dahs. He managed to keep away from them, but he had a half-mile race of it, and the Residency gates were smashed in by the mob. Then the guard dispersed the people. Next day, an old lady, who claimed to be the owner of the dog, visited the big Englishman and told him she forgave him. He was barely polite.

Burmans have no trouble with the pigs and dogs. They find their own countrymen much more awkward to meet. There is constantly some prince or min-gyee passing along the streets, and then the road must be immediately cleared, and every one must get down humbly on his knees till the great man passes. Any delay in clearing the path, or an imagined want of reverence in the shekhohing, meets with very summary punishment. Before every dignitary rush along a posse of half-naked lictors, yelling out to the people to bow down, and hitting round about them with their fasces and dahs. These masterful ruffians particularly love to insult Englishmen. During the late king's reign an edict was published exempting Englishmen from the necessity of getting down on their knees in the mud and dust, but ordaining that they should lift their hats. The letya toung dearly love to launch torrents of abuse at their victim, and make him dismount from his pony and remove his hat when the prince is half a block distant. In the spring of 1880 an English mercantile man was actually bullied into going down on his knees. But, as a rule, where they can, foreigners turn down a by-street, or into one of the waste plots of ground. This method of avoiding the annoyance is not open to a Burman.

If he should try to avoid paying due obeisance he would be denounced as a disaffected man and thrown into jail.

But there are plenty of other obstructions to be met with in the streets of the royal city. Each householder is considered, or considers himself, perfectly at liberty to do what he pleases with the section of the road in front of his house. Accordingly, when the spirit moves him, he calmly blocks the thoroughfare by erecting a temporary theatre for the performance of a pwè. The construction of such a mandut does not take very long. A framework of bamboo is run up and covered in on the roof, and one side with bamboo matting, and there you are; the stage is all ready, and the spectators deposit themselves where they can find room. After the three or four days' performance is over, the stage is pulled down, and the thoroughfare is clear again. During the season a dozen or more of these plays are going on in Mandalay on the same night, and the entire population turns out to see them, thus effectually blocking as many streets as there are performances. This might be awkward for the ordinary wayfarer were it not that he would probably infinitely prefer staying to see the drama to continuing his journey. Great men are not so complaisant. Two of the massacred princes, the Mekkhaya and the Thohnzay, seemed to take a special delight, when they were belated on some roistering expedition, in breaking up such plebeian gatherings. They would come sweeping down the street with all their retinue, and the spectators, deafened by the music and engrossed with the action on the stage, would get their first hint of the torrent coming in the vigorous blows dealt all round about them by the howling lictors. Everything would be disorder and alarm for a time, men and women down in the ditch, the stage thrown over, and the spectators scattered far and wide. Then, ten minutes later, they would all come back again; there would be a few remarks concerning his Royal Highness —"very often out at unexpected times, and always making his appearance so suddenly," etc. etc.; the bamboo erection would be propped up again, and the actors continue with the scene as if nothing whatever had happened, though the clown, no doubt, makes as much fun out of the incident as he dares.

Going about at night in Mandalay is not much practised. Theatre-goers usually return home with the rising sun. There are no lamps in the streets, and so every one who has business after dark is required to go about carrying a lantern or beating a drum or gong. If any one ventures abroad without thus marking his movements, he is promptly arrested by the night watch, and once you are arrested in Mandalay it costs a good deal of money to get free again, no matter how good an account you may be able to give of yourself. To save themselves the trouble of being constantly on the look-out as well as to trip up any one who tries to run away, the guardians of the peace have an unpleasant custom of tying ropes across the road an inch or two above the ground, and these are quite as effectual man-traps as have ever been invented.

When a fire occurs in the Golden City, it is usually a very big one and burns until it can find no more fuel. There are two reasons for this. The most obvious is, of course, that wood huts, with an inflammable roof like the danee leaf, catch fire with the slightest spark ; and there is nothing in the shape of a fire-engine, even in the palace. The second is very characteristic of a despotism, and vastly more disastrous. Immemorial custom has served to connect a conflagration with a revolution. When an attempt is to be made to seize the throne, the attention of the people and the soldiery is always diverted by incendiary fires. Therefore when a house takes fire the people found nearest to it by the night watchmen are always arrested and made responsible for the catastrophe. As a natural consequence, the moment flames burst out, not only the inmates of the house, but all the neighbours take to their heels and run, without incommoding themselves with even the smallest portion of their property. A few of the royal troops come down after a time and unroof a house here and there, and perhaps even pull down some altogether, but their efforts as amateur firemen are usually of the most feeble and futile description, and the flames go on till there is nothing more to burn. Next day the unhappy burnt-out people come back and make for themselves little hovels of bamboo matting among the charred posts till something better can be run up again. The neighbouring quarters

contribute something to support them, or they get their meals at the monasteries, and in a few months all traces of the fire have disappeared, the same rickety huts with the old scanty store of wares rise up again and the scorched leaves fall off the trees and are replaced by fresh green foliage.

The population of Mandalay is a very queer one. Of the Burmans the great majority are soldiers or hangers-on of the various great men about the court. The residuum is composed of a few honest tradesmen and a vast quantity of bad characters, broken agriculturists, gamblers, thieves from Lower Burma, and outlaws from all parts. The number of yellow-robed yahans is extraordinary. The late king used to give alms to five thousand of them daily, the jars of rice being arranged in long rows on a platform erected specially for the purpose, with mountains of bananas, and trays heaped up with nga-pee, curries, and condiments of all kinds. Theebaw Min is not so eager for merit, and actually went the length of driving a couple of thousand of the holy men out of the capital. Still even he gives them periodical feasts, and there must be quite ten thousand of the religious in the Golden City and its immediate neighbourhood. Besides these there are numerous other nationalities; the Chinaman, smooth-shaven and prosperous as always, whether gaunt and big-boned from Yunan and Szechuen, or sleek and sturdy from Rangoon and the Straits, defying the most grinding official to rob him of his profits, and drinking his tea and smoking his opium-pipe with supreme composure and good-humour; the bearded Mogul with solemn face and Jewish tricks of trade; the Paloung come down from the north with his bamboo rafts laden with pickled tea; the stalwart Shan with baggy blue trousers and tattoo marks down to his ankles, journeying in a long caravan with sword-blades and ironwork and a cavalcade of mountain ponies; the heavy, easy-going Karenn; the lithe, treacherous Kachin, bringing tribute perhaps from his chief, and spying out on his way down villages easy to raid in a night attack; all these, and a host of others, may be seen any day in the Royal City of Gems. There are not a few white men too, even nowadays, when evil times have fallen upon them, and there are not the pickings that were to be had when Mindohn Min was king. But many of them

are there sorely against their inclination. Mandalay has become an asylum for insolvent debtors, runaway soldiers and sailors, and unlucky adventurers from British territory, just as Rangoon used to be for India in the old Burman days. There are numbers of French and Italians in government service, as military instructors and superintendents of the various factories; officers who have been cashiered, or disowned by their families, or are in other ways under a cloud. One Count there is, who constitutes the scientific branch of the service in himself, manufactures and sells fruit syrups to the captains of steamers, preserves a pocket-handkerchief with a coronet in the corner, and carries his lands in his finger-nails. The old king was shamefully cheated by a variety of speculators, not a few of them Englishmen. Perhaps it was his own fault. He had a perfect monomania for making cannon, and thought that every white man must have some notion of how they were to be manufactured. Consequently, whenever some fresh wanderer came to the royal city and requested employment, he was brought before the king, and some such dialogue as the following ensued: "What is your name?" "John Smith." "What can you do?" "May it please your majesty, I am a sea-cook." "Can you make a cannon?" Whereupon John Smith, if he was a wise man, would profess his ability to make the attempt at any rate. A lump of metal would be made over to him, and he would chisel and hammer away at it and draw his monthly pay as regularly as he could get it. When results were demanded he would either run away, or boldly ask for a grant of money to enable him to go to Europe to get the requisite tools. Neither tools nor man were ever seen. Such lack of moral principle was believed by the king to arise from the want of a Buddhist training, and he continued to be imposed upon to the very end. Theebaw Min still retains some foreigners in his service, but they find it exceedingly hard to get their pay.

Thus Mandalay presents a series of violent contrasts: jewel-studded temples and gilded monasteries standing side by side with wattled hovels penetrated by every wind that blows; the haughty prince preceded by the respited murderer, his lictor; the busy Chinaman next door to the

gambling scum of the low country; the astrologer, learned in his mantras, overpersuaded by the glib talk of the Western adventurer; and over all hanging the fear of prison with its nameless horrors, and the knife of the assassin.

In the beginning of the century Rangoon was in much the same condition, except that it was very much smaller, and far more miserable and desolate. Now it has broad smooth roads, beautifully laid out public gardens, abundant street lamps, spacious mercantile offices, mills, schools, jails, hospitals, clubs, and halls. The population forms an even more motley assemblage than is to be found in Mandalay. There are Chinese, Japanese, Malays, Siamese, natives of India of all parts, Bengalis, Madrassis, Moguls, Parsis, Persians, Suratis, together with Armenians, Jews, English, French, Germans, Italians, Greeks, and all the European nationalities, mixed up with the native races, Burmese, Talaings, Shans, Karenns, but they are all kept in order by the strong arm of the law, which is the same for the rich man and the poor. May it not be long ere the same benefits are extended to Mandalay!

## CHAPTER LIX

### ERAS, COMPUTATION OF TIME, WEIGHT, ETC.

BURMESE chronology recognises five different eras, only the last of which, however, is ever practically used. These are :—

1. The Kawza era, which was abolished by Shin Gautama's grandfather. It had extended over 8650 years, and came to an end in the year 691 before the Christian era.

2. Bhodaw Eensahna, the Buddha's grandfather, then established an era of his own. It lasted only 148 years, or till B.C. 543, in which year Shin Gautama died.

3. The Religious era. Fixed by Ayatathat, King of Magadha in India, dating from the death of the most excellent payah, and current till A.D. 82.

4. King Thamohndayit's era, established by that monarch in A.D. 82 at Prome, and lasting till A.D. 639, or for a period of 562 years.

5. The current era, established by the Yahan Pohppasaw, when he usurped the throne of Pagahn in 639 A.D. The year 1244 of this era begins in April 1882.

The changing of the eras was in most cases to avoid calamities, threatened for certain years by old prophecies, and in a few instances of eras which gained no permanent place, merely for the sake of gratifying royal vanity.

The ordinary year consists of twelve lunar months, of twenty-nine and thirty days alternately. Every third year a thirteenth month is intercalated between the fourth and fifth. The date on which the year begins in the month of April is determined by the calculations of the royal astro-

logers in Mandalay, and published throughout the country by the pohn-gyees and district officials.

The months, with their corresponding English equivalents, are as follows :—

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Tagoo | about | April. |
| Kasohn | „ | May. |
| Nayohn | „ | June. |
| Wahsoh | „ | July. |

(A second, a Dooteeya Wasoh, intercalated every third year, last in 1242 B.E. 1880.)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Wahgoung | about | August. |
| Tawthalin | „ | September. |
| Thadingyoot | „ | October. |
| Ta'soungmohn | „ | November. |
| Na'daw | „ | December. |
| Pyathoh | „ | January. |
| Tabohdwè | „ | February. |
| Taboung | „ | March. |

The days are not counted right through the month as in the European system, but as with a watch, or as with the "day" itself, the month is divided into two parts: the la-san, or waxing moon, which lasts from the first to the la-byee, the full moon; and from the following day, the 16th, to the end of the month (the la-gwè) comes the waning, la-soht or a-byee-gyaw.

Besides this there is a division corresponding to that into weeks in the European system. The seven days are named after the eight planets, or astrological houses. Sunday is Taninganoay (the day of the Nay Yawee, or Sun); Monday, Taninla (from La, or Sanda, the Moon); Tuesday, Inga (from Inga, Mars); Wednesday, from one in the morning till noon, Bohddahoo (Bohddah, Mercury); the rest of Wednesday, from mid-day till midnight, Yahoo (from the dark planet of the same name, a monstrous foul nat, who strives to swallow the sun and moon, and causes partial eclipses by licking and pawing them; once every three years he attacks the sun, and once in six months the moon); Thursday, Kyathabaday (from Prispatee, or Pyehpatee, Jupiter); Friday, Thouk-kya (from Thoukkya, Venus);

Saturday, Sanay (from Thauree, Saturn). The selection of the planets to denote the days of the week by races so different now, whatever they may originally have been, as the Chinese, Scandinavians, Greeks, and all the Mohammedan tribes, is singular.

For ordinary purposes the day and the night are divided into four periods of three hours each: from six to nine, which is called ta-chettee, the first watch, one blow; twelve o'clock, the next quarter, is announced by hni'-chettee, the second watch, two blows; three o'clock, thohn-chettee, the third watch, three blows; and six, lay-chettee, the fourth watch, four blows. These hours were sounded in Mandalay by alternate beating on a huge gong and drum placed in the clock-tower by the eastern gate; and at lay-chettee, sundown or sunrise, the palace gates were closed, or opened, as the case may be. Noon is styled mohn, and midnight tha'goung; and the word byan is added in the sense of the English P.M. Thus nayee byan thohn-chettee would be three P.M.

In English territory of course the English system has been adopted, and now prevails over the whole country, Upper and Lower. For astronomical purposes, such as the casting of the horoscope and the calculations for fortunate days and the like, an exceedingly elaborate scale exists, but it is never made use of in ordinary life, though references to it in religious books are not uncommon. The unit is a naya. This is the period of time in which ten flashes of lightning may take place, or the time it takes to wink the eye ten times, or to throw out the arm as often.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | Naya are equivalent to one | | Kanah, an "instant." |
| 12 | Kanah | „ | „ Kayah. |
| 10 | Kayah | „ | „ Pyan. |
| 6 | Pyan | „ | „ Beezanah. |
| 15 | Beezanah | „ | „ Pad. |
| 4 | Pad | „ | „ Nayee, an "hour." |
| 60 | Nayee | „ | „ Yet, a day and night. |
| 15 | Yet | „ | „ Bekkha, or side (of the moon), a half month. |
| 2 | Bekkha | „ | „ La, a month. |
| 12 | La | „ | „ Hnit, a year. |

Besides the ordinary names given above for the twelve months, the soothsayers, for the sake of the increased learning it seems to give them, are accustomed to refer to the months by the names of the twelve signs of the zodiac, called Yathee.

Thus Tagoo is known as Meht-tha, the ram.
" Kasohn " " Pyeht-tha, the bull.
" Nayohn " " Maydohn, the union of the procreating powers of the male and female.
" Wahsoh " " Karakat, the crab.
" Wahgoung is known as Thehn, the lion.
" Tawthalin " Kan, the virgin.
" Thadingyoot " Too, the scales.
" Ta'soungmohn " Pyeht-sah, the scorpion.
" Na'daw " Noo, the bow.
" Pyathoh " Makahya, the sea monster.
" Tabohdwè " Kohn, the water-pot.
" Taboung " Mehn, the fish.

There are reckoned to be three seasons, the cold, the hot, and the wet.

The cold season, soung-dwin, hayman, or haymanta ootoo, lasts from the first of the waning of Ta'soungmohn to the first of the waning of Taboung, from the end of November to the beginning of March.

The hot season, nway, gehmman, or gehmmanta ootoo, lasts from the first of the waning of Taboung to the first of the waning of Wahsoh, from the beginning of March to the beginning of July.

The wet season, moh, wathan, or wathanta ootoo, lasts from the first of the waning of Wahsoh to the first of the waning of Ta'soungmohn, from the beginning of July to the end of November.

This is a very hard and fast division, but it is fairly accurate. The cold weather is, however, only perceptible in the early morning. Fifty degrees is about the lowest known in Rangoon, but it is colder in other stations. Still you have to journey beyond Bhamaw in the north before you come to the region of duck frosts. There is no mistake

about the rains. In Rangoon the annual average rainfall is a hundred inches, but in Maulmein, Akyab, and other towns, considerably over twice that amount is registered. In Rangoon, on 3rd November 1879, between one o'clock in the morning and two in the afternoon eleven inches fell. Happily this sort of thing is not usual.

In Mandalay, time was calculated by means of a water-clock, which stood in the bo-hoh, the clock-tower by the eastern gate, where were also the gong and drum on which the watches were sounded by one, two, three, or four alternate blows. The water-clock is a simple enough affair. It consists of nothing more than a large vessel filled with water, in which cups are placed, perforated so that an hour—a Burmese nayee—elapses before they sink to the bottom. It is only at the vernal and autumnal equinoxes that the hours of the day and night are equal. At other times they vary, and the Brahmins make a great fuss over their complicated calculations. In July the days are longest with thirty-six hours, the night only lasting twenty-four, while these figures are exactly reversed in January. Any inaccuracy in Burmese computations arises from the loss of the fourth book of Baydin (the Indian Vedas), which was destroyed in the bonfire made by the religious of all fishing-nets, snares, weapons of war, and such writings as are denounced in the sacred books. It was by pecking at the ashes of this volume that the domestic fowls of Burma acquired that astronomical lore which induces them to crow all together at midnight (tha'goung kyet).

It is only, however, in the capital that the water-clock is found, and in the rest of the country, and especially in all the smaller villages and towns, time is only roughly indicated by a reference to the position of the sun or the moon, or to certain daily occurrences taking place at fixed times, as "in the morning when the sun was a span above the horizon"; or "when the sun was as high as a toddy-palm"; "before the sky was light"; "when the light gets strength" about half-past five; "the earliest cock-crowing time"; "when the monks go a-begging," that is to say, six or seven in the morning, according to the custom of the local monastery; "monks' returning time," usually about eight, but varying, of course, with the charity of the neighbourhood; "breakfast

time," usually eight o'clock; "dinner time," about five; "after midday"; "sky-closing time," about six P.M.; "brothers don't know each other time," that is, just after dark; "when the lamps are lighted"; "children's go-to-bed time," about eight o'clock; "lads go courting time," about the same period; "when grown-up people lay their heads down," ten o'clock in the country, twelve with the kahlathahs of the towns; "all the world quiet time"; tha' goung gyaw, "the wee short hour ayont the twal'"; when "the iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve," as Shakespeare has it; ah-yohn cheh-nee paw, "when the red star rises,"—all these and a multitude of others are in common everyday use, and from the simple habits of the people, and their own graphic force, are quite sufficient to mark the desired time and ensure punctuality. Many can tell the time simply by looking at their own shadow. Burmans not being yet affected by this "age of machinery," as Carlyle calls it, are quite satisfied with equally simple methods of indicating duration of time. Athet ta-doung, "a breath's space," serves to denote a moment; "the chewing of a fid of betel" occupies ten minutes; "the time it would take to boil one pot of rice," twenty minutes, is well known to everybody where the cooking goes on in the front of the house. These being recognised, the chewing of two betel nuts, the boiling of three pots of rice, do not imply too great an effort of mental arithmetic. The simple rural Burmans understand as little of the English system of horology as they do of the nayas, and beezanahs, and pads of the royal astronomers—measures of time which nevertheless appear in all their horoscopes.

Measures of distance are described in equally picturesque language. Thus we have "a stone's throw," from fifty to sixty yards, bests on record with throwing the cricket ball being unknown; "a call," about a couple of hundred yards; "a musket's sound," half an English mile; "morning meal's distance," that is to say, as far as a man could walk between sunrise and breakfast time, say six miles English; a "moo," the eighth of a teing, quarter of a mile; a "mat," twice as far; "nga moo," literally five moos or half a teing, an English mile.

The book measures of length are, however, very elaborate. A san-chee, or hair's breadth, is taken as the unit.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 10 San-chee | = | one hnan, a grain of sessamum seed. |
| 6 Hnan | = | one mu-yaw, a barley-corn. |
| 4 Mu-yaw | = | one let-thit, a finger's breadth. |
| 8 Let-thit | = | one meik, the width of the fist with the thumb extended. |
| 3 Meik | = | one toung, a cubit (19½ inches). |
| 4 Toung | = | one lan, a fathom. |
| 7 Toung | = | one tah, a measuring rod. |
| 20 Tah | = | one oht-thaba. |
| 1000 Tah | = | one teing, one Burmese, nearly two English miles. |
| 20 Oht-thaba | = | one kawtha. |
| 4 Kawtha | = | one gawoot. |
| 4 Gawoot | = | one yoozana. |

A yoozana is reckoned to measure 6400 tah, that is six teing and 400 tah. The teing, or post, is the standard in common use with the Burmese for the measurement of long distances. It is also used as a generic term for any measure approaching it in length, such as a league, a kos, an English mile, and so on, as engaleik teing, an English mile.

Twelve fingers' breadths are reckoned equal to one htwa, a span. Tah implies measure in general, and is used as an auxiliary to the other measures of length, as toung tah, a cubit.

The hill tribes have a peculiar way of speaking of a place as being "one hill" or "three hills" distant. The expression may be very vague, but it gives the wayfarer an idea of what is before him which could not be expressed in the simple statement that he had ten miles to go. The road might be all down hill, or all up, for all this would convey to his mind.

The measures of capacity start from the ear of corn. One ear, ta-hnan, ought to contain 200 grains.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 200 A-say, or grains | = | one let-sohn, as much as can be placed on the ends of the fingers joined together. |
| 2 Let-sohn | = | one let-soht, the quantity of grain which may be grasped in the fist. |
| 3 Let-soht | = | one let-hpet, as much grain as can be heaped on the palm of the hand. |

2 Let-hpet = one let-koht, the quantity which may be heaped on the surface of both hands joined together.
2 Let-koht = one kohn-sah, what is sufficient for the meal of one person.
5 Kohn-sah = one pyee, a small measure.
2 Pyee = one sa-yuet.
2 Sa-yuet = one seht, quarter of a basket.
2 Seht = one hkwè, half a basket.
2 Hkwè = one tin, a basket.
4 Tin = one toh.
20 Toh = one ta-pohn, or ta-soo, a heap, or two cart-loads—hlè hni' see.

The pyee is also subdivided into four salè. Practically, the only measures used are the tin, the seht, the pyee, and the salè. All depend upon the size of the tin, but as this varies not only in almost every district, but also in many parts of the same district, the results are somewhat embarrassing to merchants making purchases from the cultivators. The English have made an attempt to introduce a standard "basket," containing 2218.19 cubic inches, but without any very great success. Application for legal establishment of the standard would cause disturbance to trade and irritation of the old-fashioned people, but it is evident that it must come some day. If Burmans had the money-grubbing instincts of the natives of India it would have been done long ago, but as long as everybody gets enough to eat and there is overplus, after offerings to the monks and the pagoda, wherewith to get money for new clothes, the Burman farmer cares very little what entangled sums in arithmetic have to be worked out by the unlucky purchaser.

The standard of weight begins exceedingly low in the scale. Paramah noo-myoo are atoms of a subtle fluid, invisible to men, but visible to nat-dewahs and the highly advanced in religion.

36 Paramah noo-myoo = one a-noo-myoo, visible particles of dust, such as the motes dancing in the sunbeam.

36 A-noo-myoo = one ka-nyit-chay, a gross particle, such as the dust which falls from the style, when a scribe writes on a palm-leaf.
7 Ka-nyit-chay = one than ohk-koung, a louse's head.
7 Than ohk-koung = one mohn-nyin say, a mustard seed.
3 Mohn-nyin say = one hnan say, a grain of sessamum.
4 Hnan say = one san say, a grain of rice.
4 San say = one hkyin yuay, a seed of the *Abrus precatorius.*
2 Hkyin yuay = one yuay gyee, a seed of the *Adenanthera pavorina.*
4 Yuay gyee = one pè.
2 Pè = one moo.
2 Moo = one mat.
4 Mat = one kyat.
5 Kyat = one boh.
20 Boh = pyeht-tha, a viss, 3.652 lbs. avoirdupois.
4 Pyeht-tha = one toolah.
4000 Toolah = one tapohng, or tasoo.

The only weights in ordinary use are the moo, mat, nga-moo (or hkwè) half a kyat, and the kyat. The standard weights are usually formed with a figure of the sacred hantha on them, or sometimes with the animal representing the royal birthday.

Formerly the Burmese had no stamped coinage, and the silver and gold used, mixed in greater or less amount with alloy, which necessitated the calling in of an assayer for every transaction, was always dealt out by weight. Now, however, there are gold coins stamped with the lion and the peacock, silver and copper with the royal peacock, and lead with the hare. The lead coins are simply blobs of metal like a spherical bullet squeezed out of shape. I have examined thousands of them, but seen never a hare. Mandalay rupees, though the same size as those of the Indian Government, are not in favour in Rangoon. They only run to fourteen annas, so that you lose two annas on each. The gold coins are practically not in circulation at all. Englishmen buy them as curiosities in the bazaar and

get cheated if they do not carefully ring every one. The smaller ones, struck from the same die as the silver two-anna bit, were principally used by the king to fill silver cups presented to distinguished visitors.

Being derived from the measures of weight, the coins have received the same names. The rupee is kyat, sometimes also called ding-ga, that is, a circular piece of metal, whether a coin or a medal, and the sub-multiples go by the names of the smaller weights: pè is one anna; moo, two annas; mat, four annas; nga-moo, eight annas; thohn-mat, twelve annas; kyat-moo-din, fourteen annas, literally a rupee less two annas; one piece is ti'-bya.

The Burmans have no bankers. In Upper Burma there are exceedingly few who would have anything to lodge with such a personage. In Lower Burma superabundant coin is almost always dispersed in giving a kyee-gyin pwè, or in building a pagoda, a monastery, digging a tank, or some such work of merit. Whatever money there may remain over is turned into use or display in the shape of fat oxen, and silver and gold cups and jewellery. These are pleasant things to look at and easily convertible into money when necessary. Burmans detest hoarding. A miser is threatened with as terrible a hereafter as a parricide. The portion of both is in awidzee, the lowest hell.

All this sort of thing shows a very unbusiness-like, certainly a very uncommercial spirit, but it is at least open to argument that the Burman is philosophically right. He cares little for the troubles of the world and the manifold questions of the day which distract the more highly cultured nations. His eyes are fixed uninterruptedly on the dark mysteries which surround our beginning, our end, and every moment of our life. The earth is only a camping-ground, in which it does not repay the trouble to establish one's self firmly and comfortably. The rich man carries his gold and silver, the poor his last handful of rice, to the pagoda, and deposits it there at usurer's interest for his future home beyond. Let the black coolie of India talk all day and dream all night of his filthy pice; let the greasy Chetty money-lender gloat over his bloated money-bags;

let the English merchant delight in all the refined luxuries wealth can bring him: the Burman is content if he has enough to eat and remain a free man, happy if he accumulates sufficient to build a work of merit, or give a free festival to his less fortunate brethren. Who shall say he is not wise?

## CHAPTER LX

### THE LANGUAGE

THE Burmese language is monosyllabic, and is therefore, like all the other monosyllabic languages, forced into the tonic system on account of the limited number of combinations of which the consonants admit. The multitude of meanings which a slight difference of accentuation gives to an otherwise identical sound is the greatest difficulty which a stranger has to contend with in studying the language, and never fails to land the beginner in a most embarrassing maze of complications. The modulations of the voice which European nations employ only to express astonishment, disbelief, interrogation, and alarm, become in Burmese and other Indo-Chinese tongues a means for distinguishing between words of different meaning; and this peculiarity offers particular difficulties to the phlegmatic, monotonous-voiced Englishman. It does not simplify matters that Burmese is, of all these languages, the softest and most pliable, and has therefore received the title of the Italian of the Far East. The varying cadence of the sounds produces to the ear the semblance of a chant, and all the people seem to speak in a kind of rhythm, so that as long as a man has ideas, it is not a very difficult matter to compose linga. But this only renders it more puzzling to the Occidental, and accounts for the fact that very few Englishmen learn Burmese, and still fewer speak it well. Of the mercantile community not one in fifty has any knowledge of Burmese at all; and the civil officers, who have to pass examinations before they get promotion, are but poor hands in conversation. The chief reason of this is, of course, that the European is accustomed

to learn by the eye, while the Burman learns almost entirely by ear, and the language is correspondingly affected. The semi-civilised man has a gift for catching faint distinctions of sound; and a modulation hardly perceptible to the European is enough to give to the Burman an entirely new meaning to the word. Fortunately the grammar is of the easiest possible character, and there is an extensive written literature, so that recourse may be had to the system of learning by the eye; but this only produces book scholars, and without a knowledge of the pronunciation it is impossible to appreciate the smooth flow of the dramatic metres. Individual sentences, too, may be clear enough, and the immediate connection of subordinate ideas with the leading thought is a great help, but longer compositions can often only be understood by a careful collating of the whole meaning, when once reading aloud would make the whole idea perfectly evident to a Burman.

One of the principal features in the language is the arrangement of words in a sentence, which, as is the case also in Thibetan, is the exact reverse of the order followed in English. This is the more singular and significant to the philologist, because the surrounding Shans, Talaings, and Karenns observe practically the same sequence as in English. Another peculiarity is in the nouns, adjectives, and tenses of verbs, which are all formed by the addition of suffixes or affixes to the verbal root. Passive verbs are in very many cases transformed into the active form by the aspiration of the initial consonant, and transitives from intransitives in the same way; as kya-thee, to fall; hkya-thee, to throw down, or cause to fall; pyet-thee, to be ruined; hpyet-thee, to bring to ruin; loht-thee, to be free; hloht-thee, to set free. The language is written from left to right, and there are no spaces between the words, and but very few peik, or stops, to mark separate sentences, except the peik-gyee which divides paragraphs, and consists of four short perpendicular lines arranged in couples. The written characters are, all but one or two, composed of circles, or segments of circles, having acquired that shape from the original Nagari, by the custom of writing with a pointed style on palm leaves. The alphabet is derived from

the Magadhi or Pali (the latter word properly meaning a text and not a language), and was doubtless imported into Burma with the teachings of Buddhism. The monosyllabic character of the language has, however, considerably changed the sound of many of the letters. There are ten vowels and thirty-two consonants, every alternate vowel having the sound of that preceding it, but considerably longer and broader in tone. The consonants are divided into groups of gutturals, palatals, cerebrals, dentals, and labials, with five liquids, a sibilant pronounced *th*, and an aspirate. In each class there are five letters; the first the simple sound, the second its aspirate, the third the sound rough and hard, the fourth its aspirate, and the fifth the corresponding nasal. The letters of the alphabet have all names descriptive of their shapes, beginning with ka-gyee and ka-gway, "great ka" and "curved ka." Some of the names are singular; "big-bellied ta," "elephant shackles hta," "bottom indented da," "steep pa," "hump-backed ba," "bridle za," and "supine ya." The vowel *a* is inherent in every consonant, and is pronounced in every case, except when it is "killed" by the "that" mark, when the consonant itself is also killed, and the effect produced is a short, sharp, abrupt termination to the word, as if the letter were strangled in the attempt to pronounce it.

A peculiarity which Burmese shares with all the other cognate tongues is the use of help words in counting—"nouns generic" as they have been called. One cannot say in Burmese, as in English, "two dogs," "four spears," "three trees," and so forth. It is requisite to mention first the thing spoken of, second, the number or quantity of objects, and finally, the genus, or class to which they belong. Thus kway hni'-goung, dogs, two animals, or two dogs; hlan lay-sin, spears, four long, straight things; ohn-bin thohn-bin, cocoanut palms, three trees, and so forth. The cardinal is not placed in immediate juxtaposition with the noun, but has the guiding word in between. There are a vast number of these generic nouns, and they come quite naturally to a Burman. He speaks of boxes and pots as so many "round things"; books and letters as "writings"; mats as "flat things"; horses and carts as "things to be ridden on";

coats and waistcloths as "things to be worn"; and so forth in infinite variety. Even the numeral auxiliaries applied to human beings vary. The Buddha, as well as superior beings and pagodas, is spoken of as a ta-zoo; kings, members of the Sacred Order, and persons in power generally, are referred to as ta-ba; respectable people to whom it is wished to be polite are numbered as ta-oo (so many "foreheads"); and in ordinary conversation, mankind generally are denominated ta-youk. Foreigners—regarded as aliens and indeed not entitled to rank as human beings at all, since they have never worn the yellow robe—receive but scant reverence from the tongues of the older people, and all Upper Burmans, the same auxiliary being applied to them as would be used in speaking of a buffalo or a pig. Thus you would say kalah hni'-goung, foreigners, two animals, or "two beastly foreigners." In Mandalay, however, nowadays, at least with respect to Englishmen, this is considered more graphic than civil. A hint of the same style of enumeration occurs in the English "twenty head of cattle," and perhaps in the military "five hundred sabres," or, "two thousand bayonets," where the weapon is more typical and perhaps of greater value than the man who wields it.

Chinese and Siamese perhaps exceed the Burman language in the number of almost identically sounding syllables, in which the slightest difference of intonation makes a change of sense, but most people are of opinion that it is quite rich enough. Thus pay in its simple form may mean (1) the palmyra palm or leaf, whence pay-sah, a palm-leaf book; (2) an anvil; (3) to have the edge or point turned; (4) to lay the ears back, as a horse; (5) to be dull of sight, or blunted in feelings; (6) to be dirty; (7) an euphonic verbal affix.

Pay, with the heavy accent (denoting a lengthening of the sound) means to give, and pay-sah in this form, to give in marriage.

Hpay, with the heavy accent (practically the same sound to an Englishman's ears) means (1) to scab over; (2) to ward off evil; (3) to tack off shore with a boat in order to gain an offing; (4) to be broken down in bodily strength or ability.

Pè with the light accent (cutting the sound short) means (1) the stern of a boat; (2) to steer; (3) to be broken off, to crumble. Pè, with the heavy accent, means (1) a measure of weight equal to six seeds of the *Abrus precatorius;* (2) any leguminous plant, such as bears seed in a pod, of which there are many varieties, including a pè-sah; (3) to put aside, reject; (4) madam, a familiar term applied by men to their intimate female friends; (5) a square measure of ground; (6) one of the four states of punishment. The last three usually have *a-* prefixed to them.

Hpè, with the light accent, means (1) to break off, as a small piece from a larger; (2) to separate and take a different course.

Hpè, with the heavy accent, means (1) satin; (2) a playing card, hpè-sah hpè-chay meaning to have shifting luck; (3) to get out of the way; (4) to remove. Chay hpè, derived from this, means to be splay-footed.

Thus we have nearly thirty separate meanings for a syllable which in rapid speaking seems, to an unpractised ear, to have throughout the same sound. This is philologically interesting, but practically it spoils the temper.

Myin, means to see, high, and a horse; and to translate the sentence "I saw a high horse," and read the same aloud, is a good test of the knowledge of the arrangement of words, of the accent, and of the power of appreciating delicacies of pronunciation.

I do not remember ever coming across an Englishman who could properly appreciate the difference in sound between kyoung, a cat, and kyoung, a monastery. They always lose their temper when you try to impress it on them. Hundreds of other instances might be given, but they would only tire and perhaps frighten off those who do not know the language, and would certainly irritate those who have begun the study of it.

It is a common saying that you cannot pronounce Burmese properly till you take to betel-chewing. I may be allowed to protest that this is said more because it looks smart than because it is true. It is, however, undeniable that the practice of chewing renders it very much more difficult to catch the sound of a word. The result appears in the

grotesque names which have been given to various places and things by old writers. Captain Hiram Cox persisted in calling the town-clerks mew-jerrys, which was neither correct nor dignified. Still the stately old king, Upa-Raza, had greater cause of complaint when he appeared in another book as "Upper Roger."

It is certain that in rapid talk, and among the lower classes, words do get softened down most remarkably. Nyoung-oo, the great lacquer manufacturing town, dwindles away in the colloquial to Ngee-a-o, and the consequences are lamentably evident in the transliteration of its name in many English books. Similarly a youth named Thah Htoon Oung will respond to the call of A-o-aw, but this hardly justifies the assertion that you do not need consonants in Burmese at all.

## CHAPTER LXI

### SELECTIONS FROM THE LITERATURE

THE following is taken from the Mahah Yaza-win :—

*The Queen Shin-saw-boo*

In Ava there lived a very learned pohn-gyee called Bamè-sodah, and a rich man in the capital gave him his son Damma-saydee to bring up and instruct. This youth was possessed of very wonderful powers, due to virtues which he had exercised in previous existences. By means of these powers he brought to life one day a fowl which had been roasted and placed on the platter before his teacher. From this circumstance, to the present day, the place where the fowl scratched and sought its food is called Shway Gyet-yet (the more popular legend assigns a different reason). On the same day it happened that a young hunter appeared in the monastery and begged the holy brother to teach him wisdom. As a present he had brought with him a roasted hare. He lifted the cover off the basket and the hare sprang up alive and healthy immediately and ran away. The pohn-gyee was very much struck at these two miracles, all the more because they happened on the same day, and he took the two highly gifted youths for his only scholars and taught them all he knew in the way of scholarship and mystic lore. Both were very zealous in their studies, but Damma-saydee learnt one letter more than his fellow-student.

Engwa-min, Theehathoo, the Burman king, levied war upon the King of Rangoon, Bya-ngya-yan, and having defeated him, carried off his sister Saw-boh-mee. The

young lady, who now got the name of Shin-saw-boo, agreed to share his throne on the condition that she should be allowed to institute religious ceremonies to remind her of the holy pagoda of her own Talaing town. Captivated by her charms, the king consented, and recommended to her notice as being the most likely to give her aid, the two most highly honoured pohn-gyees of the capital, Damma-saydee and Damma-bahla, the ex-hunter. The crafty princess managed to arrange a love intrigue with the two yahans, and by their aid succeeded in escaping to Rangoon, where in no very great time she was placed on the throne, and built a golden monastery for the two holy men to live in. Out of gratitude she wished to raise one of her two friends to share the throne with her, but the choice was a hard matter, for they were both equally well favoured, and no man could say which was the more learned. She resolved therefore to put their wit to the test and to abide by the issue.

The two holy men were summoned to her audience-chamber, where before her throne were placed two alms-bowls: one perfectly empty and plain, but decorated with the royal insignia; the other more elaborately worked and full of the choicest delicacies. The rivals were bidden to place themselves, according to their liking, by the one or the other. Damma-bahla chose the juncates, but the wiser Damma-saydee walked straight to the royal thabeht. The latter therefore received the hand of the queen after he had left the order.

Damma-bahla was full of wrath and envy, and forthwith created countless armies by reciting powerful baydin linga over a bowl full of rice, every grain of which grew into a soldier. But Damma-saydee was skilful in the same arts, and by virtue of the additional letter which he had learned was able always to overcome the machinations of his opponent, so that at last Damma-bahla saw himself overcome at all points, and took to flight to save his life. But he had not thrown off his long monkish robes, and his feet got entangled in them, and he fell and was overtaken by his pursuers, who killed him at a place where now the village Thengan Nyohn stands, "the spot where the yellow robe betrayed." The queen only reigned three years, but in that

time she greatly enlarged and beautified the pagodas of Shway Dagohn at Rangoon and Shway Hmaw Daw at Pegu. Damma-saydee reigned after her gloriously and highly honoured for thirty-one years.

The main points of this bit of Mahah Yaza-win history are correct. Shin-saw-boo was carried off in 1439 A.D. and did escape from Ava to be placed on the Peguan throne. Rangoon cantonments are to this day known among the Burmese as Shin-saw-boo Myoh. King Damma-saydee was celebrated for his wisdom and for his intercourse with foreign powers. He received embassies from China, Siam, and Ceylon. He was also certainly originally a monk; his magic arts are another thing. His death is placed in 1491 A.D. The slight suggestion of the casket scene in the *Merchant of Venice* will be noticed.

The following is a favourite fable:—

*Why Ants are found everywhere*

All the animals of the forest came to the lion-king to pay him homage. The little ant came with the rest to bow down before the king of beasts, but the noblemen drove it away with scorn. When the king of the ants heard of it he was very angry, and sent a worm to creep into the ear of the lion and torment him. The lion roared aloud with pain, and all the animals came running from every side to offer their services and fight the enemy, wherever or whoever he might be. But none of them could do any real good. They could not get at the worm. At last, after many humble embassies, the king of the ants was prevailed upon to send one of his subjects, who crept into the lion's ear and pulled out the worm. Since that time the ants have enjoyed the privilege of living everywhere and in any country, while the other animals had all of them their special places assigned at the division of the earth.

The following, the fourteenth decision of the Princess Thoodammasahree, is considered a legal precedent as well as the inculcation of a moral principle:—

### *The Dog, the Cat, and the Ichneumon*

In the time of the Buddha Gawnagohng, four pupils, a prince, a young noble, a rich man's son, and a poor man's son, received their education together in the country of Tekkathoh. When they had finished their course they asked their teacher what was the value of learning. The sayah replied as follows:—Long ago there dwelt in the land of Gahapatee Waytha four wealthy men who were great friends, and each sought to further his friends' plans as much as possible. At last one of them died and left an only son. The widow said to him, "My dear son, my husband your father Moung Bah is dead, and you take his place and succeed to all the property; but you are still very young. It would be well, therefore, if you went to your father's three friends to acquire learning and prudence from them." With that she gave him three hundred rupees and sent him off with a company of servants.

On the way they met a man leading a dog. "Hallo! you there," said the boy, "will you sell that dog?" "If you want to buy him," replied the stranger, "you must give me a hundred rupees." The youth paid the money and sent the dog back to his mother. She took it for granted that her late husband's three friends had approved of the purchase, and fed the dog and took great care of it.

Another day, after he had eaten his noontide meal, he met a man carrying a cat, and called out, "I say, you sir, will you sell that cat?" "Yes," said the man, "for a hundred rupees." The money was paid, and the cat sent back to his mother as before. She thought that this cat must have been recommended by the three merchants as a purchase, and took as great care of the cat as of the dog.

Another day, after his dinner, he came upon a man with an ichneumon in his arms, and wanted to buy it also. The man agreed to part with it like the others for a hundred rupees. The rich man's son paid the money and sent it back home. The mother, still under the same impression, looked after it as carefully as the dog and the cat.

Now the dog and the cat were domestic animals, and

she kept them about the house without any concern, but the ichneumon was a wild creature, and she was in such a state about it that she wasted away. One day when the monk from the monastery came round on his usual alms'-begging tour, to receive his dole of rice, he noticed her appearance and said, "Dear me, my good supportress, how thin you have grown." The rich man's widow replied, "Yes, the reason is this: I gave my son three hundred rupees, and sent him off to his father's three old friends to learn business habits, and one day he sends me a dog, the next a cat, and then again an ichneumon; and he gave a hundred rupees apiece for them. Now I don't mind about the dog and the cat, for they are house animals, and I get on very well with them; but the ichneumon is a jungle-beast, and the mere sight of it frightens me so that my body and limbs and eyes are all pining away." The yahan advised her to turn the creature loose in the jungle. It is wrong to disregard the counsel of one's teachers or one's parents, and so she set the ichneumon free, not however, without giving it some food well soused in oil to keep it alive till it was able to look out for itself.

When the ichneumon got into the forest he fell a-thinking: the rich man's son gave a hundred rupees for me, and since I came into his possession I have been well looked after and fed, and better than all, I have now got my liberty again. I must repay him the debt of gratitude I owe. Then he found in a pool in the forest a ruby ring, and carried it off to the rich man's son, and said: "This is no common ring, it possesses the power of gratifying every wish of its owner. Put it on your finger, therefore, and be sure you do not allow any one else to wear it." Thereupon he went off to the jungle again.

The rich man's son wished, and during the night a great palace with a pya-that rose up before his house. The king of the country, with all his subjects, came to see the sight, and the king gave him his daughter in marriage. Soon after this the princess's spiritual teacher came to see if he could spy out her husband's charm. He looked everywhere, but he could see nothing but the ring. He therefore came to see the princess by herself, when the prince had gone out,

and after making a great number of pretty speeches to her, asked if she was sure of her husband's love. "What a stupid question," said she; "he is only a rich man's son, and I am the daughter of a king." "Oh! if he is so very fond of you then, you have probably been allowed to wear his ring," insinuated the pohnna sadaw. "If I have not," returned she, "I would like to know who should?" Then the reverend gentleman went away.

A day or two afterwards, the princess asked her husband to let her put on his ring. He was very fond of her, and so he took it off and let her have it, but told her on no account to show it to any one, but to wear it constantly on her finger. The pohnna came again another day when the rich man's son was out, and began talking in his usual smooth-tongued way. The princess said: "I have got that ring you were speaking about the other day." "Have you?" said he; "where is it?" "On my finger," she said, and showed it. He begged her to take it off and let him examine it, and her nurse, who was also present, at last prevailed on her to gratify the sadaw's wishes, and so at last she drew it off and handed it to him. As soon as he got it, he slipped it on his finger, changed himself into a crow, and flew away to the middle of the Thamohddaya ocean, whither no one could follow him, and there he stayed under a seven-roofed spire.

When her husband came back and heard what the pohnna had done, he said to the princess: "You showed the ring, though I expressly told you not to do so, and now it is in the middle of the great Thamohddya sea, and we shall never be able to get it back again." He then remained sunk in a deep melancholy.

One day a bevy of the daughters of the nat-dewahs came to bathe in a pond grown over with water-lilies, not far from the house where the rich man's son was born. They took off their necklaces and jewellery and laid them down on the bank. The cat found them there, caught them up, and ran off and hid them. The houri maidens came to the cat and begged her to return their necklaces, saying they were only fit for nat-dewahs and not for mortal men. The cat replied, "If I do, will you promise to make me

a road to the place where the pohnna sadaw is living under his pya-that in the middle of the Thamohddaya sea? That is the only condition on which I will give them back." So the daughters of nats made the road, and the cat crept stealthily along till she reached the spire, where she found the pohnna asleep, with the ring on his finger. She pulled it off and brought it back to her master as a return for his kindness, saying, "You paid a very large sum for me, and have fed and treated me well ever since." The sadaw, for his part, fell into the sea and was drowned, while the rich man's son, having now regained his talisman, had every wish of his heart gratified.

Some time afterwards a band of five hundred robbers came to kill the rich man's son and carry off his ring. The dog saw what their purpose was, and flew straight at the leader of the band, and bit him to death and dropped his body down a well. The other robbers were so frightened that they ran away. Next day the dog said to his master, "I did not get any sleep last night; I had hard work to do," and then he told how the robbers had come to slay his master and pillage the place, and how he had killed their leader, and so frightened the rest away. He finished by saying, "Now I have made some return for your kindness to me. I have been enabled to save your life and property." "Aha!" answered the rich man's son, "everybody called me a fool for giving a hundred rupees for you who are only an animal, but I owe all my fortune to three animals, each of which I purchased for that sum." Then he went away into the jungle and brought back the ichneumon and kept him in his house.

Now the ichneumon, the dog, and the cat, each of them asserted that he had a right to eat before the others. The ichneumon, because he first gave the ring to his master; the cat, because when the gift was lost she had taken the necklaces of the dewah daughters, and so by getting a road made for her, had recovered the ring and thus restored her master's fortunes; the dog, because, when five hundred robbers came to strip the rich man's son of what the others had given him, and to take his life, he killed their leader and dropped him into the well, whereupon the rest of the

band ran away; "and thus," said the dog, "I am the preserver, not only of our master's property, but also of his life."

At length they agreed to leave the arbitration of their dispute to the decision of Princess Thoodammasahree, the daughter of King Dammarit, who reigned at Mahdarit in the kingdom of Kambawsa. She dwelt in the palace of a Tabindeing (the princess who remains single to be married to the next king), and was well versed in the Ten Laws (1. To make religious offerings. 2. To keep the commandments. 3. To be charitable. 4. To be upright. 5. To be mild and gentle. 6. Not to give way to anger. 7. To be strict in observing all the religious ceremonies. 8. Not to oppress any one. 9. To exercise self-restraint. 10. Not to be familiar with inferiors); and learned in the civil as well as the criminal code. The fame of her wisdom had spread to the eight quarters of the world, so that the most eminent men from every country came to her for judgment.

The three animals therefore came before the princess, and the ichneumon opened the case as follows: "A certain rich man's son paid a hundred rupees for me, fed me and housed me well, and set me free in the forest. Having regard for his kindnesses, I gave him a ruby ring, by means of which he obtained a palace with a royal spire, which sprang out of the earth; therefore I am entitled to take precedence and to eat before the dog and the cat." The cat then followed, and recounted how the pohnna had carried off the ring which the ichneumon had given her master, and how she had got it back again, and so had renewed all his fortunes. Then the dog stated his case, saying, "When robbers came to take from our master the ring which the ichneumon had given him, and which, when it was lost, was restored to him by the cat, I killed the leader of the band and then they all fled. Therefore I preserved not only my master's property, but also his life, and therefore I ought to have precedence over the other two.

When they had finished their arguments, Princess Thoodammasahree pronounced her decision as follows: "The dog, in addition to saving his master's treasures, prolonged his life also; therefore he is entitled to the first

place amongst you; but, of a truth, there are none among animals who so well understand how to repay a debt of gratitude as you three do."

Thus ends the story of the dog, the cat, and the ichneumon, from which you may learn, that although man is superior to all animals, yet kindness shown to them will always meet with its reward.

The following sermon of the Lord Buddha is the chief favourite with the Burmese. In its present form it is said to have been handed down by the favourite disciple, Ananda, who heard it from the lips of Shin Gautama himself. The Mingala-thoht is one of the first books the young scholar gets into his hands after he has learnt the ordinary formulæ of worship. There are few Burmans, even in these later days, who cannot repeat the Pali text from end to end.

### *Mingala-Thoht, the Buddhist Beatitudes, or Chapter of Blessings*

Praise be to Buddha the holy, the all-wise.

When the adorable and most excellent Buddha dwelt in the great monastery of Zaytawoon, built by the rich man Anahtabehn, in the country of Thawattee, there came to him a dewah at the hour of midnight, when the whole building was illuminated by the effulgence which streamed from his body. The dewah placed himself neither too far nor too near, neither to the right nor to the left, but in the proper spot, and after bowing low in humble obeisance, thus addressed the Buddha:

"Most adorable and excellent Buddha, during twelve long years, many dewahs and men, desirous of reaching to the holiness of Neh'ban, have striven to discover what things are blessed, but they still remain in ignorance. Do thou therefore instruct us in those matters which are most blessed."

The Adorable replied:—

"Thou son of dewahs, to shun the company of the foolish; to pay homage to the learned; to worship what

ought to be worshipped; these are blessed things. Dewah, mark them well.

"Thou son of dewahs, to dwell among good men; to have with one's self the consciousness of good deeds done in a former state of existence; to guard well all one's actions; these are blessed things. Dewah, mark them well.

"Thou son of dewahs, to hear and see much in order to acquire knowledge; to study all science that leads not to sin; to make use of proper language; to acquire a knowledge of propriety of behaviour (from the Weenee); these are blessed things. Dewah, mark them well.

"Thou son of Dewahs, to treat parents with tenderness and affection; to nourish well one's wife and children; to perform no action under the influence of sinful temptation; these are blessed things. Dewah, mark them well.

"Thou son of dewahs, to make offerings and give abundant alms; to act in accordance with the precepts of the law and of virtue; to assist relatives and friends; to perform virtuous actions; these are blessed things. Dewah, mark them well.

"Thou son of dewahs, to avoid sin, to be most instant and strenuous in such avoiding; to abstain from spirituous liquor; to remember always the principle of accumulation of merit; these are blessed things. Dewah, mark them well.

"Thou son of dewahs, to pay respect to all those who are worthy of regard; to be ever humble; to be ever contented; to be grateful for favours received; to listen to the preaching of the sacred law at the proper times; these are blessed things. Dewah, mark them well.

"Thou son of dewahs, to be patient and endure suffering; to rejoice in edifying discourse; to visit the holy men when occasion serves; to converse on religious subjects; these are blessed things. Dewah, mark them well.

"Thou son of dewahs, to practise religious austerities; to continue firm in the sublime truth; to study always to act in the most virtuous way; to keep the eyes firmly fixed on the attainment of Neh'ban; these are blessed things. Dewah, mark them well.

"Thou son of dewahs, to be unmoved; to be of tranquil

mind ; to be exempt from passion ; to be perfectly composed and fearless amid all earthly dangers ; these are blessed things. Dewah, mark them well.

"O dewah, whoso possesses and observes these thirty-eight blessings shall never be overcome, and shall find happiness in all things. Dewah, mark thou them well, so shalt thou enjoy the peace of the Areeyas."

Thus the adorable Buddha replied.

Of this sermon the venerable Bishop Bigandet writes :— "Within a narrow compass, the Buddha has condensed an abridgment of almost all moral virtues. The first portion of these precepts contains injunctions to shun all that may prove an impediment to the practice of good works. The second part inculcates the necessity of regulating one's mind and intention for a regular discharge of the duties incumbent on each man in his separate station. Then follows a recommendation to bestow assistance on parents, relatives, and all men in general. Next to that we find recommended the virtues of humility, resignation, gratitude, and patience. After this, the preacher insists on the necessity of studying the law, visiting the religious, conversing on religious subjects. When this is done the hearer is commanded to study with great attention the four great truths, and keep his mind's eye ever fixed on the happy state of Neh'ban, which, though as yet distant, ought never to be lost sight of. Thus prepared, the hearer must be bent upon acquiring the qualifications befitting the true sage. Like the one mentioned by the Latin poet, who would remain firm, fearless, and unmoved, even in the midst of the ruins of the crumbling universe, the Buddhist sage must ever remain calm, composed, and unshaken among all the vicissitudes of life. There is again clearly pointed out the final end to be arrived at, viz. that of perfect mental stability. This state is the foreshadowing of that of Neh'ban."

Prefixed to every Burmese work is the phrase "Na-maw-tatha bagawa-daw araha-daw thamma thamohddatha," which has the same significance as the A. M. D. G. of the Jesuits —"Praise be to Bagawa (the Buddha as the displayer of the six glories), the holy, the all-wise."

## CHAPTER LXII

### STRAY NOTES

THERE are some curious national superstitions about the subba-gyee or boa-constrictor. Although he is now innocuous as far as biting is concerned, he was originally the only poisonous snake. The way in which he lost his dangerous qualities is rather curious. The crow, that great benefactor to the entire race of fable writers, one day set himself to annoy the python, and declared that though he might think himself very big and very dangerous, he never killed anybody for all his biting. The subba-gyee got very angry, and eventually spat up all his poison in a pet. It was swallowed by a great variety of other creeping things, and so the race of thanatophidians was vastly increased in numbers, if not in size, while the python would be harmless were it not for his vast strength.

Nevertheless the Tavoy fishermen make a domestic pet of him, and declare he is invaluable as a weather prophet. When they put out to sea they carry their boa with them, and he remains coiled up comfortably in the bows of the vessel until a storm is coming on. Then he promptly slips overboard and makes for the shore, and the sailors hoist sail and follow him with all possible expedition. The subba-gyee is a much surer guide than the Meteorological Office. He is kept quite quiet and tame by being well fed on nutriment that does not excite his blood. His diet is usually eggs, with vast platters of pouk-pouk, "gummy rice," which is sufficiently heavy to deprive the eater, whether man or boa, of all desire to exert himself unduly. It is somewhat curious, as a first experience, to see the cat, the dog, and the baby curled up together in a corner with the boa, making one another mutually cosy.

The gall-bladder and fat of the subba-gyee are much prized for medicinal purposes, the fat especially being esteemed as a sovereign remedy for rheumatism and strains.

Of the poisonous snakes the most dreaded is the ngan, or oo-gwet, the "spotted forehead." This creature, the hamadryad or ophiophagus, is, as his name imports, a cannibal, and lives on his neighbour snakes. Specimens as long as nine feet from nose to tail have been killed near Rangoon, and, unlike all other reptiles, the ngan does not get out of the way of a man approaching his haunts, but attacks him immediately. He is worse than the walrus that roused the indignation of the French poet.

Bees are kept in a good many places in the country, but it is necessary to be very careful where you put the hives. It is a most ill-omened circumstance if wild bees make a nest under the house, or if bees of any kind fly under the floor. On the other hand, a hive on the house-top is very lucky. Honey is in great request to present to the pohn-gyees at various feasts, and especially for the embalming of the body of a dead brother. After the cremation the honey is sold in the bazaar. It is not eaten by Englishmen in Burma. "Tapping the governor" does not commend itself to everybody.

Rhinoceros horns are in as great favour with the Burmans as with Chinese medical men. Shavings of the horn are considered an invaluable cure for epilepsy, and also guard against poisons of all kinds. There are two distinct species found in the eastern forests.

Near Yay-nan-gyoung, in the petroleum district, when a new oil-well is wanted, the workmen place a marble image of an elephant on a smooth, flat stone, and surround it with gifts of all kinds, and then sit down to watch. If the elephant itself moves it indicates the direction in which borings are to be made; if not, the offering on which its shadow first falls as the sun sinks down, is marked, and a baydin sayah consulted.

A woman who has seven sons or seven daughters in unbroken succession is almost certain to become a witch; her husband had better not quarrel with her at any rate.

At Kahma, a small place between Prome and Thayet-

myo, there is a spirit flame, a kind of Jack o' Lantern, in a hollow near the town. Long ago a smith was killed in a brawl and became a nat after death. He liked his old profession and set up a nat-mee, and worked away at nights on a spectral forge. The inhabitants soon found out what was going on, and after their first terror was over used to go out in the middle of the day and leave a piece of iron, saying, "Good Mr. Spirit, make me an axe, a dah, a hoe." Next day they found it all ready made. At last a Chin—just the sort of thing one of those stupid people would do—hid himself, and just when the midnight cocks had finished crowing, up rose the smith in human shape, dressed in a red pasoh and a flaring red turban. He began hammering away on his anvil, welding a sword. The infatuated Chin at last shouted, "Make it quick." The demon smith whipped round on the instant and flung the red-hot dah at him, burning his cheek. The spy took to his heels and ran. After he had got a mile away he rubbed his blistered cheek, and in after-times there rose at that place Pah-poht, "the cheek-rubbing village." A mile farther on he began to shake all over with fatigue and terror, whence the name of Tohn, "the trembling village." Finally, when he reached the site of Pouk-poh-goo, the "swelling burst," he sank down on the ground, and was found there next morning with just enough life left to tell his story. The smith never worked again, but his fire may be seen to this day. Once a year all the house fires in Kahma are put out and lighted again from the nat-mee. Should any one neglect so to pay honour to the nat, his house and all his goods will be burnt before the year is out. The resemblance to the legend of Wayland Smith at Lambourn in Berkshire is obvious.

The common notion of earthquakes is that the earth is supported on the shoulders of four creatures called nga-hlyin. These monsters are less sturdy than the classical Atlas, and occasionally want to shift shoulders. When they do so an earthquake is the result. Others declare that the quaking of the earth is caused by gusts of wind on the under surface of the world. The idea is that the solid mass of the earth is supported on a double thickness of water, and this again by twice its thickness of air, below which is a vacuum,

occasionally, however, disturbed by storms. The Buddha gave a much more extensive explanation to his favourite disciple Ananda. "My son," he said, "eight causes make the earth tremble. First, the earth lies on a mass of water, which rests on the air, and the air on space; when the air is set in motion, it shakes the water, which in its turn shakes the earth; second, any being gifted with extraordinary powers; third, the conception of a payah aloung for his last existence; fourth, his birth; fifth, his becoming a Buddha; sixth, his preaching the Law of the Wheel; seventh, his mastering and renouncing existence; eighth, his obtaining the state of Neh'ban. These are the eight causes of earthquakes."

The Law of the Wheel is the doctrine of the four great truths: pain, the production of pain, the destruction of pain, and the way leading to that destruction. These constantly revolve upon themselves, and the manifestation of these truths is the great work a Buddha has to perform.

Omens are drawn from the appearance of the sun and moon, and especially from the particular constellation which presides over one's birth. The howling of dogs, the flight and song of birds, the appearance of any strange creature, or of a wild animal in an unexpected place, all have their special meaning. So have the nervous twitchings of the eye, or of any part of the body. If the sun or any of the planets approaches the moon there is danger about. In the four months when Venus is not to be seen, in a month when there is an earthquake or an eclipse, and on the first or last day of a month, it is advisable not to cut one's hair, marry, build a house, or begin any important business whatever. These and hundreds more may be found in the Dehtton, a book very full of singular information. Palmistry is a science of which every educated person professes to have more or less knowledge. The less a man knows, the more truculent his deductions are.

A state envelope was a very curious affair. It was nothing else but two large elephant's tusks. Half-way up they were hollow, and on the mouth there was a heavy gold cover. The tusks were mounted in different parts with gold of no mean thickness. The letter of the lord of the Golden Throne was

deposited inside, and borne to its destination with the flourish of trumpets and the braying of drums. The majesty of the Burmese king would have suffered if he had forwarded a communication to the Viceroy in a cover which cost anything under a couple of hundred pounds sterling. In similar fashion the reports of subordinate officials were written with steatite pencils on coarse black paper, and this was rolled up and put in a hollow joint of bamboo. The whole was then enveloped in cloth and sealed with a peacock seal. Communications of this kind were sometimes received by English officials on the British Burma frontier.

The following are a few proverbs :—

If you want to go fast, go the old road.

Wisdom guards life ; no one can escape bad luck. The man gifted with wisdom is never left in peace.

Every bird is handsome compared with the vulture.

A mountain is climbed by degrees ; property acquired by degrees ; wisdom learnt by degrees.

Have regard for a whole family of rats, instead of for one cat.

The more you know, the more luck you have.

A short boat is hard to steer ; a dwarf is quick in the temper.

If a cock ruffles up his feathers, it is easy to pluck him. If a man gets angry he is done for.

Constant cutting dulls the knife ; constant talking dulls the wits.

A pot half full of water is hard to carry (on the head, of course ; because the water sways from side to side) ; the less a man knows, the harder he is to argue with.

A cow that can give no milk will kick. An ignorant man is to be feared for his ignorance.

If there is much paddy (unhusked rice) in the bowl, it is hard to eat. If there is much talking it is hard to understand.

Don't speak like a mountain, it is so easy to fall off.

Eat little, stomach slender ; eat much, stomach-ache.

Beware of a man's shadow (*i.e.* his relations) and a bee's sting.

A coward tiger growls ; a coward human howls.

The well-born are fair of speech; the low-born crooked.

A slave's son is a stupid son.

If a great man flatters you, be afraid.

A great man's sword is never blunt.

There are three chances in a nagah's stare; there is but one in a king's. (That is to say, you may escape from the dragon, but if the king is angry with you, speedy death is all you can expect.)

Kyet-go a-yoh,
Loo-go a-myoh.

Blood always tells; literally, you know a game-cock from his bones, a man from his family.

## CHAPTER LXIII

### A POHN-GYEE BYAN

THE veneration and respect which meet the yahan all through his life are extended to his remains when he dies, or rather when he leaves this world. The monk does not "die" as a common layman does, he does not even, like the king, "ascend to the nat-dewahs' village." The holy man in his last existence must have been holy in order to have accumulated the sum of merits which enabled him upon earth to remain steadfast in the sacred order. When he passes away, he "returns" to the highest heavens of nats, or to the meditative states of zahn, or perhaps even to the pure and immaterial realms of arupa. Therefore a mendicant's funeral is called a pohn-gyee byan —the return of the great glory. Even a junior member is burnt with great solemnity and state; but when a distinguished brother dies, one famous for his learning, his austerity, or the great number of Wahs he has spent in the cloister, the obsequies swell into a ceremonial which attracts people from all parts of the country.

As soon as life leaves the body, the corpse is carefully washed in the usual way by the dead pohn-gyee's chief supporters and some of the monastic scholars. Then the intestines are taken out and buried in a quiet corner of the monastery grounds, or near the pagoda. The cavity of the stomach is then filled up with hot ashes, sawdust, a few spices, and whatever other available substances may be presumed likely to dry up the humours, and then the skin is sewed together again. A layer of wax is sometimes spread all over the body, but more often it is simply tightly swathed in white cloth from head to foot. This linen cloth is then

varnished over with wood oil, so that every particle of the corpse may, if necessary, be covered with gold leaf, and this, except in very poor neighbourhoods, is always done. Where there is not money enough, the yellow sacred garments are wrapped round the corpse instead. The arms are always folded on the chest. The body is then placed in the coffin. This is not, as is the case with laymen, made of planks, but of a single log roughly hollowed out, and with a very substantial lid. This lid is not fastened down for a considerable time, and occasionally a bamboo pipe leads from the coffin into the ground to assist in drying up the embalmed body. The fastening down of the cover is sometimes rather an unpleasant spectacle. Many of the old pohn-gyees keep logs in their monasteries to serve for their coffins, and these, when hollowed out, are not always a satisfactory fit. Bishop Bigandet tells of a horrible sight he witnessed, when the lid had to be crushed on with wedges and the blows of a heavy mallet. The majority of aged yahans are, however, so shrivelled and shrunken before they die, that such an occurrence, which, it must not be supposed, is any less dreadful to a Burman than it is to an Englishman, could only happen very rarely, and then probably would not be carried out in the way which so justly shocked the good bishop.

The inner coffin is then, like the body, varnished with thit-see, and gilt all over. For it is prepared an outer casket called a payoung-bohng, which is as magnificent as the skill of the local artificers and the liberality of the "benefactors" permit. This sarcophagus is often very large, and is richly gilt and painted in the panels, which are fringed with the usual mosaic of bits of mirror, coloured glass, and zinc. The paintings naturally represent religious subjects, usually scenes from the life of Shin Gautama; his famous meetings with the old man, the sick, the dead, and the monk; his departure at night from the magnificent court of King Thoodawdana; his ascent to Tawadehntha, and the like. Rearing itself over the top of the sarcophagus is usually the figure of a nagah, recalling the pious dragon chief that sheltered the Lord Buddha from a flood of rain by coiling seven times round his body and expanding its hood as a covering.

Meanwhile, money is being steadily collected for the

remainder of the rites, and as this comes in from the elders of the surrounding villages and the kappeeyadayakas of neighbouring religious houses, the kyoung-thah-gyee of the deceased's monastery sets about erecting an edifice like a thehn, a "monastery of the dead." This is a building, more or less substantial, according to the sanctity of the departed, built of teak, and open all round, with the tapering ecclesiastical pya-that rising over it. Hither the coffin, with the sarcophagus, is carried and deposited on a dais in the centre, a slight railing serving to keep off wild animals. Over it a large white umbrella, with a deep paper-lace fringe, is fixed, and round about hang a number of paintings, similar to those on the payoung bohng, some of them, however, representing the favourite subject of the different races of men as known to the artist—the swarthy Hindoo, the oblique-eyed Chinaman, the Karenn with his pig on his back, and the ghastly white-faced Englishman with dog and gun. Others are simply grotesque, and a few horrible, in their delineations of the horrors of hell. Nevertheless, they are all allowed to hang there, for though it is expressly stated that paintings are among the five species of gifts which are not meritorious (dancing is another), the ordinary layman thinks that the painting he gives must certainly be an exception. Here and there in this odd kind of mortuary chapel are also kehnnaya, gay tinselled pasteboard figures of men with birds' lower extremities, manoht-thah khennaya and nat kehnnaya, the latter having the wings and gorgeous aspect of nat-dewahs. Here the body lies in state, and there is a constant stream of pilgrims—some of them from far distant parts of the country—who come to say their religious sentences, make offerings of flowers and fruit as they would at the pagoda, and contribute what they can afford towards the remainder of the ceremony.

The body remains till the required sum is collected. During that time numbers of festivals are celebrated at the neh'ban kyoung; bands of music play frequently, and the same people often make three or four different offerings. The lying in state usually lasts several months, sometimes considerably over a year, and it is to be noted that a pohn-gyee byan never takes place during Lent.

At last all the funds are collected. An open space outside the town is cleared of jungle, and in the centre of it is erected the funeral pyre. This is constructed of bamboo matting, pasteboard brightly painted, and covered with the usual tinsel. It is, of course, in the form of the seven-roofed spire, the number of roofs, as some think, representing the number of heavens of nat-dewahs. It is square up to a height of fifteen or twenty feet, where there is a platform, on which is placed a sort of cenotaph, resembling the payoung bohng in construction and decoration. Above this towers up, fifty or sixty feet higher, the bamboo canopy. When this is ready, a fortunate day is selected by the elders of the town, for they have the management of the funeral rites, to the exclusion of the brethren of the yellow robe. This is announced all over the country-side by sound of gong, and when the appointed day arrives the people come flocking from every side, each quarter or village bringing its pya-thats and padaytha-bins, the former similar in construction to the spire on the funeral pile, the "wishing trees" laden with a-hloo for the surviving brethren of the pohn-gyee who is to be cremated. The spires are arranged round about the great central one, to be burnt along with it; the padaytha-bins are delivered at the kyoung.

There is always a great gathering round the monastery of the dead, where the sramana has been lying in state. The coffin is taken down with great ceremony, and placed on a strongly built, low four-wheeled car, surmounted by the eternal bamboo spire. Now comes a part of the ceremonial which always seems strangely absurd, not to say indecorous, to foreigners. Two, or sometimes four, stout rattan or coir ropes are fastened to the car, and forthwith all the able-bodied men present commence a frantically contested and uproarious tug-of-war. No sides whatever are selected, or numbers agreed upon. Reinforcements are always ready to back up a side which seems on the point of losing, and prematurely ending the struggle; and when a man loses his wind he leaves go his hold and sits down to have a rest. Sometimes the rope breaks, and then the progress of the funeral has to be suspended till a new one is procured and fastened on, for there is no rule as to a side abiding by its

accidents. Sometimes the contest goes on for two or three hours, and there are instances recorded where it was not till the third day that a definite result was arrived at. The explanation is simple enough to a Burman, and I am surprised that it has not hitherto been given by any writer on Burma. It is a work of the greatest possible merit to drag a pohn-gyee's body to the funeral pyre, and this koothoh falls to the share of those who win in the tug-of-war. The late Captain Forbes said that the explanation was that "the conquering village will get the better of their losing rivals in all sports, contests, or other matters during the year." But this is impossible where the winning side may be composed of men from a score of different villages in circles remote from one another. Besides, there are no championship meetings in Burma. It is to be noted also that during the lohn swè thee it is usually only the payoung bohng that is on the car. The actual coffin is brought down afterwards.

At last the coffin is brought to the pyre and hoisted up to its lofty platform, beneath which is stored a great quantity of combustible material: wood soaked in oil, pitch, and abundance of scented chips. Then nothing remains but to light it. When a layman is burnt, fire is set to the pile by the nearest relations with a box of Bryant and May's matches. But this is much too worldly a method for a member of the Thenga, and even the fire obtained by the friction of a plug in a hollow bamboo—an ingenious amplification of the two dry sticks of a variety of barbarous tribes, common in most monasteries—would fail to satisfy the dignity of a pohn-gyee. The pyre is lighted by rockets fired from a distance. Scores of these dohn have been prepared weeks beforehand, and many have been carried round triumphantly in procession by the people who have made them, a band of music preceding, and young men and girls dancing and singing of the potency of the powder and the accuracy of the aim which will gain for them the glory of setting fire to the pyre. Each rocket has a figure of some kind, a nat-dewah, a tiger, a hare, or a beeloo, attached to it. Some of them are of huge size, constructed of the stems of trees hollowed out and crammed full of combustibles, in which sulphur largely predominates. Many are eight or

nine feet long and four or five in circumference, and secured by iron hoops and rattan lashings. Up in Mandalay some are very much larger. These are let off at the funeral pile from a distance of forty or fifty yards, the largest being mounted on go-carts, and many others guided by a rope fastened to the pya-that, the rocket sliding along by means of twisted cane loops. The great majority fail to have any other effect than making a great splutter and poisoning the air. A few refuse to budge at all; others topple off their carts and fizzle erratically on the grass. A pohn-gyee byan in Upper Burma was frequently attended with loss of life. Some one, at any rate, of the bigger rockets is sure to fly off at a tangent and plunge into the crowd, where its weight, to say nothing of its fiery belchings, is sure to find one or more victims. In Lower Burma it is only by the strictest police regulations and a rigorous maintaining of order in the spectators, and system in the pyrotechnists, that like catastrophes do not happen. At last some lucky dohn plunges right into the inflammable materials piled below the bier, and in a few minutes the flames are leaping high above the topmost pinnacle of the spire. Roof after roof falls, setting fire to the offerings placed round the basement. The joints of bamboo explode with a noise like a pistol shot; the crowd cheer each separate occurrence, and when finally the central spire falls with a hiss, a shout rises from the multitude which suggests anything but death and pious observance. But here in the manoht-tha pyee all is changeful, sad, and unreal, and one more death brings but nearer to the final rest of Neh'ban.

When the last smouldering embers have cooled, the monastic brethren search for any pieces of bones that may remain, and these are carefully gathered up and buried somewhere near the pagoda. Sometimes, in the case of a particularly saintly man, they are pounded down, mixed into a paste with thit-see, and moulded into an image of the Buddha, which is stored up in the monastery. The custom followed in other Buddhist countries of erecting a shrine over the dead is, in accordance with the teachings of Shin Gautama, an honour but rarely accorded in Burma.

## CHAPTER LXIV

### DEATH AND BURIAL

WHEN a Burman dies, after the first interval of poignant grief on the part of those present, the body is carried to the side of the central room of the house, abutting on the front verandah, and there deposited between the house posts. Messages are then sent to the monastery, to the friends and neighbours, and a funeral band is summoned. Meanwhile the corpse is carefully washed from head to foot, and the two big toes, and usually also the thumbs, are tied together with the hkyay-ma gyoh and the let-ma gyoh, which, if practicable, should be locks of the hair of a son or daughter; but if this is not to be got, a strip of cotton cloth is used. The whole body then, from the armpits downwards, is closely swathed in new white cotton cloth, and when this is done the best clothes the deceased possessed are put on. If the family is wealthy the pasoh or tamehn is often very rich and costly. The face is always left uncovered, unless there are special reasons for concealing it, arising from the cause of death. Between the teeth is placed the kadoh-ka, a piece of gold or silver as ferry-money to pay for the passage of the mystic river, which is known to exist, but concerning which no further particulars are to be got from any Burman I ever met. It is no doubt a relic of old demon-worship, the meaning of which is forgotten, while the custom has clung on. Charon's toll of course immediately occurs to the classical reader. If the family is very poor, a copper or lead coin is used, or perhaps nothing more valuable than a betel-nut. The coin, whatever it is, is usually quietly carried off by the grave-diggers. None but an outcast would venture to do such a thing.

By this time, or, if the death occurred at night, in the early morning, the band has arrived, and commences to play dirges in front of the house. The Soola-gandee monks greatly disapprove of this practice, as savouring of ostentation, and their followers therefore often dispense with the band, as do many Burmans in the large English towns. But otherwise the band is always engaged, and plays on steadily till the funeral takes place. Almost invariably, too, one or more of the yahans from the monastery come along and stay in the house, their presence being invaluable in keeping away evil spirits, who might otherwise loiter about the place. The monk may or may not deliver a discourse, just as he sees fit. The body is then put into the coffin, which is a very flimsy kind of affair, ordinarily made of let-pan (*Bombax malabaricum*), a very light and porous kind of wood not unlike deal, or sometimes of eng tree (*Dipterocarpus tuberculatus*). This is fastened down roughly with any kind of nails that come to hand. A number of the relatives and friends now come to condole and lend their assistance in making and ornamenting the bier and hearse, most of them bringing presents of money or food with them. A few years ago a very meritorious society called Oopathakah was started in Rangoon, the object of which was to provide decent and honourable burial for all members. The actual society did not last very long, but it served to show that the old feeling of mutual help still existed. At no time, however, have the Burmans been backward in this meht-sway a-poung a-paw, which is one of the thirty-eight points insisted on in the Mingala-thoht, the most favourite sermon of the Lord Buddha's. Friends and neighbours troop in with presents of a few pice, baskets of rice, meat, fruit, tobacco, betel, and material for decorating the bier, so that a man who in his lifetime never had a rupee to bless himself with, receives in Lower Burma a funeral grand enough to bring everybody connected with it under the scope of the sumptuary laws, if it were held in King Theebaw's territory.

The body is kept a longer or shorter time according to the station of the deceased. If he was rich, the preparation of the funeral paraphernalia takes some time, and it is nowadays almost a matter of ceremonial necessity that all children

and blood relations should assemble for the burial. Technically, if the death occurred on the last day of the month the funeral ceremonies should take place before midnight, certainly before the new moon appears. This rule, however, is far from being strictly observed in British territory. A poor man is buried as quickly as possible to save expense; a rich man's obsequies last according to the pride of his family and their inclination to spend money. The coffin, called hkoung, is usually covered with tinsel paper, or perhaps gilt. The talah, the bier, is shaded by a light canopy, or spire made of bamboo, and carried by means of four long bamboo poles. This pya-that is usually most gaily decorated with coloured pasteboard, tinsel, and paintings of different kinds, and looks strangely bright and theatrical to Europeans. It is carpentered and decorated in the street before the house, for it is from eight or ten to twenty or thirty feet in height, and often overtops all the houses in the quarter.

When the day fixed for the funeral arrives the yahans are invited to the house. They usually come in numbers proportioned to the amount of alms given. There is ordinarily an address in the house, dwelling mainly on the vanity of human wishes and the uncertainty and misery of life on earth. Then the coffin is brought out and placed on the platform made for it in the lower part of the pya-that. Over it is then thrown a pasoh if the deceased was a man, or a tamehn or neckerchief if a woman. This usually conceals the coffin, unless it is richly gilt, or painted, as is sometimes the case, with figures of the nobler of the animals, such as lions, tigers, monkeys, and elephants. Then the distinctive garment is looped up so that all may see. Over this cloth are usually placed short sticks wrapped round with gold and silver paper, shway hpee-dohn and ngway hpee-dohn, forbidden in Mandalay except to the officials. Equally contrary to the Yahzageing are the sanda ya-mya, two long streamers which come down from the top of the spire and are taken in the hands of as many of the personal friends as can get hold of them. The musket shots which are fired often during the processions in Lower Burma would entail especially heavy punishment under Burman rule. Latterly some laymen in Rangoon have even been bold enough to glorify the funerals

of their relatives with kehnnayah, figures of men or women with bird-like feet and lower extremities. These spangled toys, which are commonly to be seen in all monasteries, are by rights only used at the last ceremonies of a member of the sacred order. But when some men are bold enough even to flaunt the royal white umbrella, it is hardly to be expected that the distinctive honours of the yahans would be respected.

The procession having been formed, a start is made. At the head come the alms intended for the monks and for the poor, some carried by men, some by women, the sexes going in separate lines. After this come the pyin-sin, never in any very great numbers, unless the a-hloo be particularly bountiful. Following them comes the band, and often a troop of singers. These are always hired for the purpose, and their callousness is as little to be cast up against Burman natural affection as the unlovable doings of the mutes at an English funeral. Close upon the musicians comes the bier carried by six or eight young men. Then in a general crowd follow the relations, friends, and neighbours, all on foot. Many passers-by, total strangers, join in the procession from motives of piety. Here and there the men carrying the bier stop and dance in a curious fantastic way to the measures of the dirge of the singers. The funeral *misereres* are usually the composition of an improvisatore in the chorus, and deal with the life and death and good actions of the deceased. A measure called moung pyoung is the most generally used. Occasionally there is a tug-of-war with a rope as at a pohn-gyee's funeral, one side exclaiming, "We must bury our dead"; the other, "You shall not take away my friend." As a matter of necessity the former party must conquer, but they sometimes have to get recruits from the crowd before they can manage it.

It is a matter of regulation that a funeral should never go to the north or to the east. The graveyard is usually to the west of the village, and the dead should all be carried out of a walled town by a gate reserved for this purpose. In Mandalay this a-mingala tagah is that to the south-west, and it is avoided by those who have business in the myoh as cursed, as indeed its name imports. Other rules are that a corpse must never be carried towards the centre of the

town, still less can it be taken into it. If the man has died in the jungle, and the funeral has to pass a village, it skirts round the outside of it.

When the cemetery is reached the coffin is taken out and placed on the ground near the grave. The immediate mourners collect round about it; the rest of the people go to the zayats, of which there are always several at every graveyard. The music stops as soon as this place is reached. The alms are set up in order before the pohn-gyees, and these again intone the five secular commandments, and the ten good works, besides a long string of Pali doxologies. As soon as they have finished they leave and file off to the monastery, the a-hloo being carried after them. The chief mourner at the same time pours water slowly out of a cocoanut shell, saying, "May the deceased and all present share the merit of the offerings made and the ceremonies now proceeding." This performance, called yay-set-kya, is a regular accompaniment of all almsgiving. The idea is that the earth will bear witness where men may forget. When Shin Gautama ascended the throne under the bawdee tree, Mahn-nat the devil claimed that it was his, because he had discovered it first, and all his mighty host shouted aloud when he called upon them as witnesses. The Lord Buddha had no witness but the earth, and to it he appealed, asking whether he had not achieved the Three Great Works of Perfection, the Ten Great Virtues, and the Five Renouncements. The earth gave testimony to this koung-hmoo with a terrible roaring and a violent earthquake, so that Mahn-nat and all his legions fled in terror. Hence the pouring out of water when alms are given.

While this is going on women are walking about the zayats giving cheroots and sweet drinks, betel, le'pet, and biscuits among the visitors. The nearest relations are carrying out the final rites. The coffin is swung three times backwards and forwards over the open grave, and then lowered in. This ceremony, called oo-teik-thee, is looked upon as a kind of final farewell, and after each person has thrown a handful of earth the grave-diggers fill up the grave. These sandalahs are outcasts, the name being probably derived from the Sanskrit term for the lowest caste of the

Hindoos. It is considered a mark of respect to wait till the grave is filled in, and when this is over, there is some conversation in the zayat over the refreshments, and then all make their way home. The pya-that, bamboos, and other paraphernalia are the perquisites of the sandalahs, and they usually get all the alms intended for the poor, though at a great funeral there is often much competition for the pasohs, turbans, and pieces of muslin given away in alms. It is to be observed that there is no tombstone put up; nothing to mark for future years where the grave was.

Though burial is becoming common with all classes in English territory, the old method of cremation still prevails extensively in the jungle districts, and was invariable in Independent Burma when the deceased had attained considerable age. When the body is to be burned, mee thin-gyoh thee, it is not necessary that the coffin lid should be fastened down, and sometimes there is no lid at all. The preparations and procession are identical with that for burial. The pyre is composed of billets of wood, laid two and two at right angles to each other, quantities of sweet-smelling woods being placed in the intervals. A few billets are placed above the coffin as well as below, and at the bottom of the funeral pile is usually an iron trough into which any unconsumed bones may fall. The pyre is kindled at various points by the nearest relations, and the sandalahs stay by to see that it burns freely, and that all is consumed. When the fire has burnt out, two or three of the nearest of kin come and search about among the ashes for the bones. These are washed clean with cocoanut milk, and in the case of great people in Lower Burma of late years, often with lavender water, eau de cologne, or any of Atkinson's or Piesse and Lubin's scents. They are then wrapped up in clean white cloths, and placed in a newly made earthenware pot, which is not uncommonly gilt, or covered with pictures of sacred events taken from the birth stories. This is then taken back to the house temporarily.

For seven days after either kind of funeral mourning goes on in the house. This means in wealthy houses indiscriminate eating and drinking. Cooking goes on all night, and all day relays of condoling visitors come and eat

and enjoy themselves. The yahans also come every morning and receive offerings, and recite a string of Pali sentences. Friends bring contributions towards all this expenditure, but the result of it too often is that the heir finds that not only are all his father's hoarded rupees gone, but he himself has contracted a very considerable burden of debt. Even in the case of poor people, where the feasting is limited to the seventh day, great expense is incurred. The yahans are as necessary then as at the funeral, for the house must be purified, and the evil spirits who may be hanging about, as well as the lehp-bya of the deceased, have to be exorcised and driven away. Then the pot containing the bones, if the dead person was burnt, is taken to the graveyard and buried, or sometimes is put into a hole near the pagoda. Superstitious people at burials sometimes affirm that they have caught the "butterfly" of the deceased in a handkerchief, and take this home to the house, where it lies till the seventh day, when it is opened after the discourse of the yahans, and the lehp-bya is driven from the house. It can then give no more trouble.

Sometimes a small pagoda is erected over the cremated ashes of a highly respected relative. These are regarded simply as monuments, even when they are over a king, to whom alone of laymen in Native Burma they could be erected. They must not be used as places to offer worship, and that this may be known, the members of the sacred order ordain that such pagodas shall have no htee, no umbrella, on the top. To obviate this it is usual with the builder to dedicate the place to Shin Gautama, and thus at once secure a monument and a htee. Pagodas erected in honour of yahandas, or particularly sainted pohn-gyees, receive the umbrella of right, and are places very eminently suited for the pious laymen to worship at. Such temple tombs are called a-yoh saydee, but are not of such frequent erection as they used to be.

In some cases the relations grind down the bones to powder, and mixing this with the wood oil called thi'-see, mould the paste into a small image of the Lord Buddha, which they set up in an honoured place in their houses, and make use of as the object of their morning and evening doxologies. Such images are called tha-yoh.

In British territory money and public estimation alone determine the character of the funeral ; but formerly in Mandalay, apart from the ceremonial provided for a pohn-gyee byan, there were five kinds suitable for a layman—one for the sovereign ; then for members of the royal family ; thirdly, for nobles, and those who had received official rank, a rather precarious and dangerous possession ; then for thootays, rich men—so designated by special patent, which placed them under the "protection" of the court, that is to say, made them accessible for the demand of "benevolences" ; and finally, a funeral for ordinary people. The burials of the poor in Mandalay were gruesome spectacles. The body was carried to the graveyard in a big, roomy box, grown rickety with much use, or, more simply still, in a mat. The sandalahs had dug a hole, little more than three feet deep. If it was not long enough the body was squeezed in. I have seen it jumped on for this purpose. Enough earth to cover it slightly was thrown on by the grave-diggers, and the howls and fights of the pariah dogs at night suggested how it was that epidemics did not arise.

In the case of the funeral, say of an a-twin-woon's wife, the coffin might be gilt, with a web of white cotton cloth fastened at the head—velvet was only permissible for a person of royal blood ; the bamboos composing the bier were covered with red cloth ; the pasohs, tamehns, and so on, given in alms, were carried on long poles, each pole borne by two men. In the procession the insignia of the woon, his umbrellas, fans, kamouk, and the rest were carried in front ; after the alms and yahans came a dozen or more young women, carrying the court dress and decorations of the deceased, then her state carriage and that of her husband, hers being usually a palanquin. The billets of wood on the funeral pyre were gilt. These honours were so greatly valued that not a single privilege would be omitted, though the husband had to borrow money for every single item. Indeed, were he to have omitted any of them, he might be in danger of losing all, as not sufficiently appreciating the dignities conferred upon him.

As soon as Mindohn Min, the late King of Burma, died, or at least as soon as it was officially made known that he

was dead (for there are great doubts as to whether he died on the 12th September or on the 1st October 1878, or on some date between these two), as soon as the ministerial announcement came out on the latter date, the bo-hoh, the great drum and gong suspended in a tower by the eastern gate, were stopped. The new king's drum and gong were not sounded till nine o'clock in the evening of the funeral, after which they were struck in the ordinary way every three hours. Bands of soldiers and police with gongs patrolled the streets all night long to see that everything was quiet. The princes had been seized and cast into prison some time before, but there was a chance that their adherents might raise disturbances on their behalf, and this precaution was kept up for some time. Meanwhile a pagoda, to serve as a mausoleum, was being run up with the greatest expedition close to the Mint, on the eastern side of the palace, in the outer enclosure, and this was finished in four or five days. The king had specially requested that his body should not be burnt according to ordinary royal custom, and the Sin-byoo-mè, the head queen and chief mourner, had resolved that this wish should be respected.

The corpse was laid out in state, and on the 3rd October the greater number of the foreigners and the officials of inferior rank were admitted to look upon it. This ceremony was conducted in the Hman-nandaw, the "Glass Palace," a room in which Theebaw Min has received most Europeans since. The body lay in the fore part of the chamber on a gilt couch, or bedstead, studded with bits of glass, and was robed from head to foot in white, a piece of white satin covering the face. The royal number of white umbrellas was canopied overhead, and at the top part of the couch were arranged the regalia in a row. On this occasion the Sin-byoo-mè and the A-nouk Nan-ma-daw, the favourite queen of the West Palace, sat by the couch and slowly waved gorgeous peacock fans. At other times the sonless queens took it in turn to watch by the body, two at a time. Round about were grouped all the other queens and princesses, weeping piteously. The deceased king's brother, the ex-Pagahn Min, the newly elected Theebaw Min, and all the high officials, were behind at the farther end of the room.

Suspended over the corpse was a small flat piece of gold shaped like a heart, called thay-nyohn, and in this the lehp-bya, the butterfly spirit of the departed king, was supposed to dwell till such time as he should be buried. The public lying in state only lasted a few hours, but the body remained there unaltered till the time of the funeral. It was not certainly known whether any attempt at embalming was made, but the body was very much shrunk, and contrasted forcibly with the genial presence of his majesty when last he was seen alive. A sadaw informed me that the good old king died with the words, "Payah, payah, Neh'ban," on his lips.

The funeral took place on the 7th, at noon. It was the first that took place that day, and no other was allowed until the royal obsequies were entirely over. The city gates were shut and strongly guarded to prevent any such going forth if any one had been bold or ignorant enough to attempt it. From the gates of the interior palace stockade to the tomb, the whole route of the procession was laid with scarlet cloth, and round the mausoleum was a wide bamboo fence covered with long cloth, inside of which were some slight sheds, run up for the accommodation of the queens and the chief ministers. It is worthy of notice also that, in a favourable position to view all that passed, was erected a similar mundut for the accommodation of the late Mr. Shaw, then British Resident in Mandalay, his assistants, and the Residency Chaplain, the Rev. J. A. Colbeck. The Resident and Assistant Resident were admitted in full uniform, wearing their shoes and swords, and it was thought that at length a solution of the great shoe-question had been arrived at, for though in the outer court this dignity had always been allowed them, the fact that later on they saw the king not very far off roused hopes of an audience at a remote date with similar appendages. But alas, the hopes were vain.

Punctually at twelve the procession left the palace gates. At the head of the cortège came the late king's wan, a huge palanquin borne on men's shoulders. Close upon it came six elephants, in royal purple and gold housings, and after them two richly caparisoned ponies. Following these were three of the min-gyees and a woon-douk, the fourth chief

minister, the Loung-shway being too old and feeble to appear. Then came the band, called byeing-doung, on such occasions, playing an ancient royal *miserere*, and after it a great crowd of the minor officials, wearing boungs, white official hats. Behind these came a number of men and women bearing the regalia and the utensils of the royal dead, the crown, the heavy court dress, the gold betel box, the spittoon, the hentha, and the rest. Then came an empty coffin, overlaid with scarlet velvet and plates of gold, and immediately behind it the body in a ta-nyin, or hammock of white velvet, attached to a bamboo swathed in red velvet, across which was thrown a white velvet covering spangled with gold. To the ta-nyin were attached two long cloths, sanda-ya-mya, held by a multitude of queens, princesses, and exceedingly young princes (all the older ones being in jail). Above were the eight white umbrellas, and over the Sin-pyoo-mè, the chief mourner, were held three of the same royal colour. Her three daughters, one of whom, the Soo-payah Lat, became Theebaw Min's queen, were shaded by bright yellow htees, a colour which ranks even over gold. Thus they proceeded to the bamboo enclosure. The nit was announced that the new king, Theebaw Min, was coming, having just received the beht-theht, been anointed by the Brahmin Pohnnas. He appeared shortly, seated in a lofty wan, at each of the four corners of which crouched a maiden with bowed head and clasped hands, the whole being carried on the shoulders of forty men. Preceding him was his bodyguard of twelve pages all dressed alike and armed with double-barrelled breechloaders in red serge cases. The Shway nan-yin payah, the new possessor of the golden throne, remained for half an hour, looking very ill at ease, and little inclined to inspect the splendid spectacle before him. Then he gave the order for the last rites, and in accordance with custom returned immediately to the palace. The actual ceremony of burial was now concluded with as little ceremony as previously there had been superabundance of it, and in a very short time the yahans, of whom there had been a great multitude present, were superintending the carrying off of the 108 (representing the number of divisions in the foot of the Lord Buddha, and the beads on the rosary) heaps of alms piled

up in great mountains in a long shed to the east of the mausoleum. This was the last of the pious king, Moung Lohn, Mindohn Min, the Convener of the Fifth Great Synod.

The following is the substance of a funeral dirge sung in Mandalay by a Rangoon man whose wife had died in the royal city:—

Gone, gone art thou, sweet wife; gone far away,
Fair still and charmful, stretched on thy cold bier,
As erst thou wert upon that joyous day
When first I wed thee; gladsome brought thee here,
And joyed to think that thou wert mine. Ah me!
The butterfly's silk wings are shred; no more,
Ne'er more to rest upon thy head, Mah Mee'—
Sweet name for wife: "affectionate." Deplore
Her death ye nats that rule forests and streams,
The hills and vales, and greater ye who guard
The sacred law, the holy shrines, the beams
Of silent moon, and sunlight baking hard
The hot-scorched earth, not scorchèd more and seared
Than is the parchment of my tortured heart.
Nay, bear with me, good neighbours. Be not feared.
I am not mad. The nat-soh hath no part
Of me or mine. The spaewife sure hath said it.

Ay, thou wert mine when last I trod the earth,
Ere yet, all sinful, I was born as man,
And yet again, in yet another birth,
I'll claim thee; when mayhap a happier kan,
A fairer sum of merit, hardly won,
Will lead us on, linked-armed, to linkèd death,
That so progressing, joyful we may run
Through all life's changes, and with single breath,
Through heavens and zahn and rupa, we may bound
To Neh'ban, blissful home of rest. So mote it be.

Alas, thou wert from Hanthawaddee's plains,
And were we there, where thou so fain hadst strayed,
A stately pomp had honoured thy remains,
In silk and velvet wound, with gilded shade
Of wide umbrella's pride, and regal spire
Had towered to the skies, all seemly draped
With flowing cloths and princesses' attire,
Such as now thou dost wear, from earth escaped
To heavens of nats. Yea, and of fretted gold
With mirror-work inlaid had been this case,
The last sad dwelling of thy earthly mould;
But here it may not be, not in this place.

In Mamyay's soil the stranger finds a tomb
As poor as doth the meanest in the land.
The trumpet's wailing note, the drum's low boom,
May not be heard; all callous as the strand
That threats the sailor on a stormy night,
The law stands fast and bids the mourner pass
With smothered moan; and hurry from its sight
The alien clay. Far from thy home, alas!
Thy dirge e'en waxeth faint. Oh, Awgata,
The Lord, the Law, the Order, the Three Gems,
I bow me low. Grant me the holy calm.

# INDEX


ABUSE, twenty-seven kinds of, 509
Acting, 287
Akat, ceremony of, 34
Alchemy, 397, 400
Almanac, prophetic, 346
Alms, merit of giving, 34, 141, 158
Aloung Payah, 442
  his six arms, 443
  opinion of himself, 444
Alphabet, 557
Amaday, 47
A-mingala gate, 457
Anawrata-saw Min, 175, 268
Anchorites' caves, 140
Animals esteemed, 101
Ansah pyit-thee, the game, 374
Ants, 563
A-nyah-thah, 243
Apeht nay, 216
Apin, 419
Arakan image, 169
  pagoda, 169
Areemadehya, the next Buddha, 90
Army, strength of, 501
Artillery, 498
Assault, ten kinds of, 509
Athinkaya, 88
Athoorehn, 294
Athooya nats, 91
A-toomashee pagoda, 172
Augury, 401
Ayet hkè, 400

BADDA, the present world, how populated, 93
Bahwanah, doxology of the Three Precious Things, 36
Balachong, 279
Band, 315
  military, 494
Bamnee, 321
Barristers, 511
Baskets of the Law, settlement of, 146
Bathing, 72
Bats, legend of pious, 186
Bawdee-thah-da, 44
Baydin Sayahs, 239, 412
Bee-itt, toilet-box, 273
Beeloogyoon, 351
Bee-nat-daw, plinth, 162
Bees, 573
Begging tour of monks, 31
Bells, object of, 203
  in South Kensington Museum, 205
Betel, 71
  boxes, 273
Bigotry, absence of, 144
Birthday candles, 6
Boa constrictor, 572
Boat-racing discouraged by Government, 361
Boats, varieties of, 362
Bohn-gyoh fairies, 321
Book of the Oath, 512
Boomazoh nat, 346
Boxing, 374
Buddha, characteristics of a, 184
Buddhas, seasons when they appear, 89
Buddhism introduced into Burma, 147
Buddhist Beatitudes, 569
Buffalo fights, 378
Building sham pagodas, 438
Bullock's hide of ground, 438
Buoyancy of temper, 66, 380
Bwè, titles, 22
Bya-bazan, women's, 42, 61
Bya-deht, 506

CABALISTIC figures, 411
Carriages in Mandalay, 457
Carts, 81, 211
Carving in wood, 67, 126, 129
Casting images and bells, 197, 205

Cats, 83
Cavalry, 497
Changing names, 7
Characteristics according to birthdays, 5
Charmed tattooing, 42
Charon's toll, 584
Chetties, 248
Child-birth, ceremonials at, 1, 2
Chinese game of chess, 367
Chin-lohn, 372
Chins, oppressed by Burmese, 439
Choral dances, 311
Church lands, 134, 528
Classification of the people, 95
Codes of law, 504
Coffin of monk, 579
  layman, 585
Coiners, 398
Colours used for lacquer ware, 276
Compliments of the New Year, 348
Conjurers, 410
Consecration of king, 446
Constitution, 449
Cookery, objection to smell of, 70
Cooking range, 79
Coronation, 446
Corvées, 66
Councils of religion, 146
Courting time, 56
Cryptographs, 166

DAHLERZAN necklaces, 336
Daht, the elements of the body, 414
Dancing, varieties of, 309
Decisions, standard in law, 505
Dedication of pagoda, 157
Deebinkayah Payah, 191
Dehtton, 412
Deing, ground-keepers, 372
Destruction of successive worlds, 89
Dewadat, supposed identity with Jesus Christ, 96
Dietists, 414
Difficulty of becoming a human being, 19
Dirges, 587, 595
Diseases, 80, 418
Divorce, 59
Doctors' prescriptions, 413, 416
Dog, cat, and ichneumon, 564
Dogs, 82
Doh-bat-than, 323
Doxologies, 185
Dreams, cause of, 387
Dress, 72
Drill, 499
Druggists, 414
Duke of York's nose, 168
Durian fruit, 278
Dyeing silk, 270

EARTH, guardian spirit of, 346
Earthquakes, causes of, 574
Edehpat, four laws of, 36
Ehng-soung nat, 233
Empress play, 293
Enforced labour, 521
English carriages in Mandalay, 259
*Entada pursætha*, gigantic creeper, 270
Envelope of State, 575
Excommunication, 119
Executioners, 428

FAMILY of late king, 452
Farms, smallness of, 532
Feminine beauties, 264
Festival offerings, 329
Fire-balloons, 227
Fires in Mandalay, 540
Firing of guns, etc., at the New Year, 347
Fish oils, 281
Fish, tame, 137
Fishermen, punishments of, 283
Flogging round the town, 516
Forest reservations, 531
Forts, 502
Fowls, domestic, 83
  their astrological knowledge, 136
Fox and geese, 374
Freeing birds, a work of merit, 84
Friendly societies, 585
Funeral of monk, 578
  processions, 587
  five classes of, 407, 591

GAHTAS, virtue of, 239
Gardens, 82
Geing-oke, 109
Gilding a pagoda, 175
Gohn-nyin-toh, 369
  varieties in the play, 370
Gossip, 217, 265
Grave-diggers, 427

HAIR, 72
  days for cutting, 382
Hanthawaddy, 321
Hare, symbol of the moon, 340
Harmonicons, drum and gong, 315
  bamboo, 316
Harp, 316

Harvest-spirit feast, 237
Hauteur, cause of Burman, 380
Heart's blood, 61
Hells, torments of the eight, 99
  representations of 161, 307
Hierarchy, 109
Hilsa, the Indian salmon, 280
Hindoo game of chess, 364
Hkoung-say Gyoon, 351
Hlay-pyoung loo-pyoung, 360
Hloht-daw, 506
Hmaw Sayah, 420
Hnget-pyaw-boo, 158
Hostile pairs, rhyme of, 62
House-posts, 76
  foundation of, 76
  decorations, 335
  shops, 68
Houses, 75-76
Hpoung Woon, 487
Htee, 162

IDENTICAL sounding words, 558
Idolatry repudiated, 183
Illuminations, 225
  on the river, 226
Image houses, 192
Images, three classes of, 189
  growing, 195
Initiation to the monastery, 113
Inscriptions on bells, 202, 205
Instruments, musical, 315
Insults to foreign missions, 436
Islands, the four great, 91

JARS, large, 280, 342
Jewels, 407

KABALWAY, 131
Kachins, 439
Kadaw, presentation of, 469
Kadoh-ka, Charon's toll, 584
Kaladet, monastery bell, 30
Kammawah sah, 113
  woo'lè, 113
Kan, doctrine of, 107, 185, 414, 428, 442
Kappeeya-dayaka, manciple of the monastery, 32, 150, 330
Karenns' story of the creation, 439
Kayah-than, music, 322
  words, 319
Kè-boh, blackmail, 352
Kemindine, 181
Kin Woon-min-gyee, 489
King of the wizards, 409
Koh-soung nat, 232
Koothoh, merit, 153, 218
Koothoo-daw pagoda, 172
Kouk-hnyin, sticky rice, 262
Koung-hmoo, 344
Koyin, novice, 108
Kullagah, tapestry, 211, 335
Kyaik-htee-yoh pagoda, 167
Kyee-gyin pwè, 289
Kyee-zee, triangular gongs, 216
Kyet-sha-teing, prayer flags, 187
Kyoh-toh-thee, tilting at the string, 377
Kyouktaran, rock-carvings, 193
Kyoung-daw-gyee, royal monastery, 129
Kyoung-tagah, 33

LAND, seven modes of acquiring, 527
  sanctity of ownership of, 528
Landmarks, legal, 529
Language, etiquette of, 403
Law and justice, origin of, 94
  wheel of the, 575
Lawka, duration of a, 88
Lawkee seht, 386
Laws, the ten, 568
  eighteen original, 505
Laziness of Burmese, 379
Le'hpet, pickled tea, 296
Lent, 219
Lepers, 427
Let-thohn-daw, pages of honour, 489
Leyp-bya, 236, 387
Libraries, 130, 131
Lictors, 428
Life, varying duration accounted for, 98
Linga, metres of, 318
Lohn-swè-thee, tug-of-war, 324
Loo-byet, 295
Loosening of the elbow joint, 312
Loo-twet, 429
Lotteries, 523
Lullaby, 85

MADEE, the model wife, 321
Magadhi, 557
Mahah Ganda, 164, 201
Mahah-gandee monks, 149
Mahah Thammada, the first king, 95
Mahah Yaza-win, 431
  excerpt from, 561 *et seq.*
Manaw, the sixth faculty, 386
Mandalay, foundation of, 535
  roads, 537
  hill, 141
Maneedaw, 190

Manoht-tha-bohng, the state of man, 87
Manoht-theeha, Assyrian figures, 126, 162
Marines, 496
Marriage, three methods of contracting, 53
  age at which contracted, 54
  ceremony, 57
  customs at, 58
  forbidden degrees, 59
  rhymes, 63
  lucky months for, 64
Mats, 79
Mat-tat-kodaw, standing image, 190
Meals, 69
Meditation, 103, 129, 386
Mee-ehng-byan, fire-balloon, 227
Mengohn pagoda, 171
Menu, 95
Military officers, 493
Mingala-thoht, sermon, 569
Minhla, garrison and fort of, 502
Monasteries, construction of, 125
  brick, 133
  their names, 140
  of astrologers, 134
Monkish laxities, 121, 136, 180
Monks, their duties, 111, 118
  how honoured, 122, 137
  mode of addressing one another, 120
  their titles, 135
Monopolies, 522
Monuments to the dead, 590
Mortifications discouraged, 135
Mosaic work, 468
Moung Thah Byaw, the actor, 294, 317
Mulberry-tree, 268
Myo-sah, 507

NAGAH, 292, 331, 333
Nagah hlè, 384
Nah-kat, for the ears, 50
Naingan-gyaw Woondouk, 132
Names, system on which they are given, 4
Naming children, 3
Nan-tagohn, prayer-flags, 187
Nat-king, his arms and mounts, 346
Nat-mehmma, 239, 417
Nats and nat-dewahs, difference of, 230
Nat-sehn, 237, 476
Nat-sin, shrine, 231
Nay-ka-zah, 197
Naymee, drama of, 99, 305
Neh'ban, 103
  three stages in, 105
Nga-hloht pwè, freeing fish, 342
Nga-pee, varieties of, 279
Ngè-byoo, pure from birth, 26
Ngway-daw, poll-tax, 519
Nogana, preparation of, 332
Nyee-daw, noung-daw, spirits, 232
Nyoung-yay-oh, jars, 233

OBSTRUCTIONS in Mandalay, 538
Offerings, 188
  to water-spirit, 354
  to spirits generally, 236
Officials, subordinate, 507
Oil-press, sesamum, 81
Omens, 238
  kingly, 443, 477, 575
Ooboh-nay, holy day, 215
Oogandaw Hill, 327
Oo-gwet snake, the hamadryad, 573
Oo Hpo Nyah, great dramatist, 292
Oopagoht, shin, 226
Oopekka, highest stage of meditation, 387
Ophthalmic medicine, 414
Ordeal, trial by, 412, 420, 514
Oung thwè, go-between, 54, 55
Oung Zaya, the hunter, 442

PADAYTHA tree, 92, 330
Paddy morality, 246, 252
Pagahn, 172
Pagoda surroundings, 163, 165
Pagodas, classification of, 154
Pah-gwet, spotted man, 428
Pahrahzeekan, deadly sins, 119
Painting, 67, 580
Palace intrigues, 448
  massacres, 450, 452, 464
  rules, 475
  spire, reverences made to it, 475
Paladohtta, green vitriol, 399
Palm-leaf scribes, 131
Pan-bin, centre of stage, 285
Pan-gyet Woon, 458, 490
Pan-teing, flower offering, 228
Panthagoo thengan, holy robe, 149
Para-gyoon, pagoda slaves, 423
  king of, 425
Paramats, schismatics, 147
Parawoon, sacred enclosure, 127
Pareht-yoht-thee, religious ceremonial, 394
Parricide kings, 448
Pasohs, designs for, 271
Patama Byan, 223

Pateemouk, Book of the Enfranchisement, 28, 119, 121
Pawlohn, a fillet, 73
Payah tayah cure, 419
People foredoomed to hell, 100
Perfection, three great works of, 184
Pestilence in a village, 235
Ploughing, 242
Pohngyee, 108
Pohnnas, 134
Poht-thwin yittah, 299
Polygamy, 59
Poo and Tapaw, founders of Rangoon pagoda, 179
Pride, thirteen kinds of, 220
Prisons, 516
Processions, 329, 343, 467
Prodigies denounced, 194
Property in relation to marriage, 60
Proverbs, 576
Punishment of Brahma, 120
Punishments, 515
Puzoondoung Creek, 250
Pwè, arrangements for, 285
Pyat-tha-dah, unlucky days, 382
Pyathat, spires, three kinds, 126
Pyehtta, 101
Pyinsin, 108

QUALIFICATIONS for Sacred Order, 111
the fourteen; of a judge, 505
Queens, 452, 453

RACING boats, 355
Ramayana, 364
Rebellion of 1866, 487
Receptions, 337
Red Postern, 457, 473
Refrain in the yehn dances, 313
Regard for life, 339
Relic chamber, 156
Relics, sacred, 154
Renouncings, the five, 184
Republican tendency of Buddhism, 110
Rhyme, 319
Rice, varieties of, 262
Rice-mills, hand, 80
English, 253
Roads, village, 85
in Mandalay, 537
Rockets at monk's funeral, 582
Roofing, 77
Roofs, monastic, 126
Royal lands, 530
funeral, 593
robes, 257
Royal despatch boats, 362
Ruler, first appointed on the earth, 94
Rules for travelling, 384
partnerships, 385
Rupa, 16 seats, 103

SACRIFICES on founding a city, 477
Sadaw, 109
Saddan Min, the Lord Elephant, 303
Sadeik, MSS. box, 35
Sah-haw sayah, improvisatore, 73
Sah-see-gyoh, 131
Salaries of players, 288
ministers, 506, 518
Salt manufacture, 280
Sandathooreeya, king, 199
Sapoopatee payah, 190
Saw pay Sawmay play, 175, 198
Sayah, 109
School studies and amusements, 15-18
Seasons of the year, 547
Seats of nats, 102
Seht and Sehtathit, 386-87
Sek-ya-wa-day, king, 446, 480
Sermon at Tawadehntha feast, 328
Shampooing, 417
Shan tattooers, 41
Shin-bin-thah-young, recumbent image, 190
Shin-pyoo-thee, initiation to monastery, 22-26
Shins, novices, 108
Shin-saw-boo, queen, 563
Shin Taboung, 148
Shway Dagohn pagoda, 160 *seq.*
foundation of, 164, 178
Shway Goo, 174
Shway Gyet-yet pagoda, 340, 561
Shway Zet-daw pagoda, 167
Sit-du-yin, 363
S'mah, cabalistic letters, 47
Smoking, 70
Sohn, a wizard, 409
Sohn-thee, 333
Soolagandee sect, 149
head of, 151
Soolay nat, 180
pagoda, 225
Soo-payah Lat, 449, 453
Soung-dan, ascent to pagoda, 161, 327
Spells, 422
Spirits, names of certain, 421
Stage books, 300
State of man specially desirable, 97
Stay in monastery, proper duration of, 26
Still-born child, 2

Subba-gyee, boa constrictor, 572
Suppleness of dancers, 310

TA-BINDEING, 442, 448
Ta-doung-sa, beggars, 426
Tagoung nat, his malevolence, 232
Tahpanah teik, relic chamber, 155
Talapoins, origin of name, 112
Tamanè htoh-thee, 261
Tamehn, woman's skirt, 73
Tattooing instrument, 40
  recipes, 46
Taw lay-wa, model wives, 61
Ta-zet, 27
Ten Commandments, when to be observed, 28
Ten Laws, 568
Thabeht Hmouk, excommunication, 119
Tha-byay bin, the sacred tree, 233, 395
Thaddah, knowledge of, 26
Thah-thana-baing, 109
Thah-thana-hlyouk ceremony, 37
Thamatawee Patthanah, 36
Thana'kha, 325
Thanya, 387
Tharana-gohng, invocation, 36,
Thatohn, 175
Thayè tohp-thee, roof-beating, 394
Theebaw, his character, 447
  appearance, 462
  birth, 462
  education, 463
  a patama byan, 463
  popularity, 465, 471
  his titles, 461
Theehadaw island, 138
Theehoh monastery, 130
Thehn, 113, 128
Thehn nats, 324
Thengaha, kingly laws, 447
Thi'gyan pwè, 345
Thin-bohng-gyee, alphabet, 17
Thin-kee-ya, 18
Think-kaza Sadaw, 151
Thi'see, its uses, 276
  proverb about it, 277
Thi'see bin, wood-oil tree, 272
Thohda, 103
Thoodammasahree, Princess, 568
Thooyakè, 100
Thooyoung seed, 301
Thoozata, 332
Threshing corn, 243
Throne, 469, 474
Time, modes of expressing, 544-46
Tin-myin-Kway, sitting image, 190
Titles royal, 446
Tohn-boo lehn cheatery, 376
Toilet of ladies, 289
Toung-ya, hill cultivation, 241, 245
Trade of Burma, 534
Triple consolation, 18
Tug-of-war, 324, 581, 587
Tunes, 296

UMBRELLAS, varieties of, 405
Urushi tree, 272
Utensils, the sacred eight, 112

VIRTUES, the ten great, 184
Volcanoes, mud, 167

WAH, Lent, 26, 221
  end of wah gyoot, 221
Wakening sleepers, disinclination of Burmese to, 390
Wall-pictures and inscriptions, 133
Washing the head, proper days for, 382
Washing the king's head, 351
Waste lands, 531
Water-clock, 548
Water feast, 345
Water-strainer of monks, 341
Wayland Smith, 574
Weedooya, 292, 300
Weenee, the whole duty of the monk, 35
Wehzah, wizards, classes of, 410
White elephant, reason for reverence paid, 480
  tests of, 481
  establishment and housings, 483
Whitlow, prescriptions for, 421
Winning post in boat-races, 357
Wisdom, six kinds of, 36
  praises of, 219
Witch doctors, 389, 416, 419
Witnesses, persons ineligible as, 512
Women, independence of, 52
Wood, petrified, used for polish, 276
Woot-daw, fate, 300
Woottoo, 292
World, formation of, 90
  system of, 91
Worlds, two kinds of, 90
Worship, 188, 217

YABEHNS, silk growers, 267
Yahanda, 42, 97
Yahoo, the foul nat, 5, 545
Yandabo treaty, 432

Yankeentoung pagoda, 171
Yathay-myo, 307
Yathee, signs of zodiac, 547
Yatheht, recluse, 140
Yaydaya Yayee, cure, 419
Yay-hpoung hmyaw-thee, fire rafts, 226
Yay-set-chah ceremonial, 157, 588
Yay-thohn-pwè, 348
Yazamat, royal lattice fence, 256
Years, mahtoolè and tawtoolè, 347
Yeendaw Mah-lay, the singer, 311
Yehn dances, 311
Yet yahza, lucky days, 383
Yoht-thay plays, 293
Yua-hkya-thee, 235
Yua-soung-nat, village spirit, 234
Yuwa-tan, magic rod, 419

ZADAH, horoscope, 7-13
  calculation from, 9
Zahn, state of, 103
Zahts, the ten great, 292
Zaing-ga-naing, image, 193
Zawtagohmma play, 297
Zayat, rest-house, 216
Zaydee-yan, pagodas, 154
  reason for their shape, 158
Zaywaka, the physician, 418
Zodiac, signs of, 547

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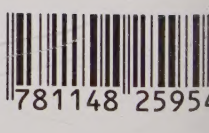

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